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M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE 1

AUTUMN 1992

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Interview*

Shaun Hutson Interview

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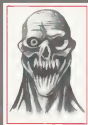
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FRONT/BACK COVERS: BRAIN DEAD (PHOTOS BY PIERRE VINET)

VIEW FROM THE HILL



Cast your mind back approximately half a decade. After years of relative inactivity, the United Kingdom small-press, or fanzine if you will, field suddenly jolted into life with a pair of seminal publications: **SHOCK XPRESS**, written by knowledgeable professionals, and **SAMHAIN** penned by enthusiastic first-timers. In the wake of these two torch-bearers came a slew of well-intentioned offspring, at the fore front of which was one **WHIPPLASH SMILE**, a magazine which was regarded as one of the UK's best amateur publications, and certainly one of the most successful. So why am I dredging this to you? Well I need, I was I who was responsible for **WS**, which ran for about three years and garnered a reputation for varied and unusual content, as well as being, most importantly readable.

Admittedly I dived headfirst into **WS** with little or no knowledge of what such a venture would entail, more or less finding my footing as I progressed, and ultimately after six issues of experimentation, the beast was grudgingly laid to rest. And so after all this time, here we are again. The genesis of the magazine you are now clutching came about through a venture entered into at my place of employment, where it was suggested I relaunch **WHIPPLASH SMILE** in a more professional format. Looking back in retrospect, **WS** was okay, it succeeded in its initial aim, which like those of most solely amateur zines is to meet like-minded enthusiasts, put across your viewpoints, and become a general forum for opinion and conversation, all fair enough, but in actuality **WS** began finding its way into places that in reality, it never deserved to be, it was never intended as a widespread distribution deal, and it started to take up too much of my life, hence its somewhat premature burial. Therefore to raise **WS** phoenix-like I think would have been an error, however, the idea of launching some sort of publication was too appealing to let go, therefore armed with the inside knowledge of all the pitfalls and joys of fanzine production, the decision was reached to give birth to **MONSTROID**. You may think that there is no place for yet another 'horror' related magazine in an already bloated market place, and who knows, in a few issues' time I may well be agreeing with you, but in honesty, if I didn't think I could add something of merit to the genre then I wouldn't be bothering. For when I scour the current crop of publications I can't help but feel something is missing. **SHOCK XPRESS** for instance, which led the field by acres has given up the ghost and seemingly mutated into a one-off annual (which in fact has the equivalent page count of four issues, and the price of eight). Exploitation is a very easy area to exploit - you said it Stefani!, **SAMHAIN** to me at least has turned into everything it set out to abhor in the miserably declined **STARBURST**, Alan Jones' **SHIVERS** should have been the publication to turn the field around but instead has, on the evidence of its first few editions, become the British equivalent of **FANGORIA** with endless set visits and interviews, and little or no critical standpoint. In fact in contradiction to said magazine's Cronenbergian moniker I almost named this publication **RABID** as that is one thing Jones' rag isn't! Then we're off into a 'trip' through the world of true fanzines,

which by their very nature tend to be hit and miss affairs, some shine out (**JUNGAWA**, **HEADPRESS**) while others seem stuck in a permanent timewarp serving up chronological investigations into video nasties (which were past their sell-by date nearly a decade ago!), third-rate appraisals of Dario Argento: manifested enthusiasm for generally dull, though evidently 'hip' product (yes we're talking Hong Kong cinema here!), and do-it-by numbers film reviews which usually re-tread the plot in its entirety, summarise with "This film is neat, the monsters are great etc, etc" then round the whole hash off with a rating informing us of the amount of gore spilled. Perhaps this is what certain audiences want, perhaps I'm missing the point entirely, but at a time when horror and exploitation is at one of its lowest ebbs in years, regards quality product, and the whole genre is in danger of being swamped in juvenile mentality, I feel someone should be pointing out to a potential audience, why a certain film is good and why another should be trashed, no matter how many intestines were removed throughout its duration. To this end I feel the two primary ingredients of a magazine should be to educate and entertain - with **MONSTROID** this is my aim. Finding suitable content should pose no problem, there's vast amounts of material out there which has gone by unnoticed, and even some of the more obvious material can be covered, if in an original fashion. My personal preferences these days lie in the older more obscure product, so going with this, and mating with my intention to educate on newer product, **MONSTROID** will be aiming for a 50/50 blend of contemporary and vintage material, half mainstream, half obscure. Additionally, for a magazine to survive in this present recession-festering climate, it is vital to appeal to as many readers as possible, slightly calculated perhaps, but it is my intention to cast the nets out as far as possible and trail in a thorough cross-section of reader ship, hopefully appealing to the novice and know-it-all enthusiast. Each issue of **MONSTROID** should have a wildly eclectic gathering of topics, and to disassociate ourselves from the predictable, we won't by any means be limiting content to 'horror' product, we will also encompass the worlds of science-fiction, sleaze and exploitation past and present in their various guises. Looking through this first issue I feel I have gone some way to achieving this objective. While the Shaun Hutson interview may not be the absolute pinnacle of originality, some of you may think that such a veteran of media interrogations has been 'done to death' in the genre press. It is worth reminding you that a piece with such a credible 'name' personality can only do the magazine credit with potential advertisers, stockists etc. Certainly a relevant factor, on top of which Mr Hutson always has something interesting to say for himself. However going back to what I said about striking a balance between mainstream and obscure, for every more obvious piece such as this I'll make sure it is counter-balanced with something equally unexpected - such as this issue's **SURVIVAL QUEST** article. It's swings and roundabouts really, and I'd be interested to hear from you if you think I've succeeded in my aim for this first issue, if not what alterations could be envisaged to improve the content? What do you want

to see in upcoming issues? Like all small press publications, **MONSTROID** is a forum for your opinions, your views, your suggestions - use it as such, please get in touch, I'm by no means as egotistical as this editorial might suggest, it's just that if you are to have any integrity in publishing, then you must be honest with yourself and your readership - simple as that!

For this publishing endeavour which we have christened **MONSTROID**, I have managed to cull together four-fifths of the original **WHIPPLASH SMILE** line-up (some familiar names from the mists of time for those of you who have been part of the fanzine scene for some years), and supplemented these with some new names who hopefully will become familiar to you. On the subject of contributions, freelance submissions are encouraged, though unlike the days of **SMILE** where I tended to throw in just about anything, I will only publish material of relevance, and please if you are dubious about your writing capabilities, don't even bother, there are plenty of slipshod tags around where'll publish anyone's drivel. Similarly, if you have a fanzine you want mentioning, I won't be running a regular fanzine section, that being far too predictable, but if you have confidence in your endeavour, send it along and I or another contributor will 'review' it within the confines of our **TERRORTYPE** column. One thing that hopefully will make **MONSTROID** stand out in the crowd is our aim to get actively involved in film production, through our parent company **IMAGERY STUDIOS**. Unlike other publications which are happy to rubbish all and sundry and offer little of constructional guidance, we want to encourage intelligent enthusiasts who have solid ideas for a script, or direction, special effects, whatever, but don't know where to direct their ambitions. This is an area which will develop as the magazine evolves, but each issue within our **DIY DUNGEON** column we will be pointing out tips on various aspects of film-production for fledgling Savins or Cronenbergs. At a time when the British genre industry is at least on foot under, it would be nice to think we could have some part to play in its re-emergence, no matter how small, and with fans getting up off their arses to make their own picture, such as the crew of **BAD KATMA**, there is obviously a pool of talent who might just be able to swing things around, so if you're out there in realerland and are at a loss to find someone, anyone, who will take you seriously, then drop me a line, and share your ideas, tips etc with us, you never know your luck. Most famous film-makers started with homemade efforts, and as the saying goes mighty oaks from acorns grow! And that will just about do for this maiden flight of fancy, all the details you should need concerning the magazine are displayed opposite, though for any letters, personal correspondence, hate mail, general rabid ravages, write to me direct at the Skirbeck Road address and utilize the Pen Street one for ordering and such forth. However, if writing to me, please enclose an SAE if you require a reply. So I'll leave you to enjoy this first flight, express my thanks to all involved in putting the thing together, remind you to get writing, and depart with the thoroughly predictable "Death to WHIPPLASH SMILE, long live **MONSTROID**!"

JOHN HILL
EDITOR
29.9.92



Full Metal Racket

Gareth James interviews Shaun Hutson

Shaun Hutson's living room appears totally obstinate to the 'bad boy' of literature's public image of hell, leather and horror. A walk through fireplace, carved table lamps and ornate furniture occupy its generous space. A subtle hint at Hutson's more sinister occupation may lie with a dark wood cabinet tucked into the corner of the room. On it is a model of a human head, spider legs bursting forth, a captured transformation scene from *Carpenters* "THE THING". Frozen blood drips from the legs and head of the tableaux while the mouth is contorted into a permanent silent scream.

While Hutson's grim relic looks on we settle into armchairs with Metallica's latest album rumbling in the background, and with it brings some explanation of Hutson's unprecedented rise to fame within the realms of dark fiction. Metallica themselves in retrospect the merchants of thrash, screaming vocals, white noise guitars, frenzied 'take no prisoners' hardcore noise. Hutson himself, "DEATHDAY", "SHADOWS", "RELICS" graphic horror literature's equal to the splitting venom of Metallica's no compromise sound. Breathless, anarchic but scorned by their respective genres. Bloody good, but no-one took them seriously.

Now as Metallica lie at the pinnacle of rock success, older, wiser and sacrosanct so Hutson enjoys sales only equalled by that of King and Herbert. His books have drawn praise from the "Sunday Times" through to the pages of "Metal Forces" giving Hutson a high public profile enhanced by his appearances on the 'Jonathan Ross Show'. The speed may have slowed but the vehemence and razor edge remain with both now finally earning the once reluctant accolades so long denied.

As our conversation swings between Nirvana, films and the occasional jaunt upstairs to thrash the resident Hutson drumkit (the hi-hat set uncomfortably low), we settle on Hutson's latest batch of nihilistic novels so apt for the so called 'brave new world' of the 90's.

"Your latest novel 'HEATHEN' seems to be a departure from the typical Hutson voice of 100 miles an hour horror crammed with bloody fatalities. Did you make a conscious attempt to lower the body count for any reason or did the novel demand something different?"

There has never been a time when I have sat down in my career and thought if I write a book in a particular way and style that it will appeal to a particular market. "HEATHEN" was completed in the same way all the others were what I wanted to write about at that particular time the same ethnic I've had ever since I started writing. Looking back on 'HEATHEN' with two women as main characters and like *CSI* as its intended book cover I suppose

going to give it a greater appeal than say something like 'ASSASSIN'.

"Why women as the main characters?"

"From I suppose 'VICTIMS' onwards I never wanted my women characters to just be damsels in distress. That's one thing I've always hated about some horror movies - the women just existing as cannon-fodder to be rescued by the square-jawed hero. The thing also with 'HEATHEN' is that not just men go out for revenge. Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned as the saying goes. There is no reason why the desire for vengeance should be the exclusive preserve of the male ethic. Bonson in 'DEATHWISH' is a prime example. Why is it just not as acceptable as a woman to avenge the death of her husband as 'HEATHEN' illustrates."

"With this in mind how do you think 'HEATHEN' will be received, particularly by your fans, so accustomed with the usual level of gore and violence?"

Like you say the body count is lower, but I actually think as one of the main books I've written in view of tone and atmosphere similar to the nature of 'NEMESIS'.

"Is this an area of your novels that you will explore more?"

The books are certainly becoming darker and darker. I know my readers aren't stupid and that they're going to think that just because I've dropped the body count that I've gone soft - or whatever. I certainly think that there's no way that you could describe 'HEATHEN' as a soft novel, not by any stretch of the imagination.

'CAPTIVES' again I would describe as a very dark thriller, probably more so than 'HEATHEN' because there's no supernatural threat in there at all. To be honest I feel more at home in the territory say of that of 'ASSASSIN'.

and 'HEATHEN' than say in the small town with an ancient curse like 'EIEBUS' was set.

'DEADHEAD' due out next year returns very much to "CAPTIVES" territory. A private detective runs in to a small town question in search of his lost daughter and to find the fact he's just been diagnosed as having terminal cancer and I suppose you've got a right cheery little tale! Is more terrifying than zombies, werewolves or whatever because it's real. If you've got a horror story with a central thread running through it that readers can identify with then the horror becomes greater because it could actually happen to themselves. If people would stop judging me for a moment on how many people are dead by the end of chapter one and look at a novel say in its overall nastiness then I think they probably would appreciate it more."

"Do the monikers 'Baron Of Blood', 'Prince Of Puke' hinder you then?"

No. I certainly don't object to them. I'd never turn round and say something like 'patronisingly, don't ever call me that, or I'm outraged by that' because it would be like saying that all the novels before 'HEATHEN' were beneath me, like I was trying to reach some sort of artistic plateau or something. A lot of it is that the things that interested me when I was 22 and writing 'SLUGS' are not the same as things that interest me at 31 and writing 'HEATHEN'.

I'm in no way ashamed of those titles in fact the 'Emperor Of Excess' is still one of my favourites. But the violence now is more psychological and emotional than physical. To be honest my view of the world has grown much darker as luckily I've become more successful. I don't know why really as just being married in the way I'm working at the moment.

"Will 'HEATHEN' see a different marketing approach away from the 'King Of Horror' theme?"



"If *Slugs* is to be read differently because its author speaks to all people who say would never touch a horror novel with a bargepole. The book buyers who say I don't read horror are usually the ones that have never picked up a horror novel in their lives. If they did they'd probably enjoy the experience. I suppose its because people who say just read thrillers never go past the thriller section, as with people who read romance never go past the romance section. I hope in a way that it will widen my readership and I know that the hardcore fans won't be disappointed with it either."

"Some scenes from both 'CAPTIVES' and 'HEATHEN' are pretty strong stuff. Have you or your publishers ever been tempted to 'pull' certain pages because they could be too disturbing and draw intense criticism?"

"Only my first publishers the defunct W.H. Allen ever censored one of my novels which was almost eight or nine years ago. They wanted me to do a novelisation of *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE* but Tebe Horner wanted too much for the rights. One of W.H. Allen's editors just told me to do a story about a nutter with a chainsaw and go as far over the top as possible. The resulting manuscript was *CHAINSAW TERROR* which I wrote under Nick Blake. When I submitted it they rang up and said they were going to have to cut it and 25 pages duly went including a chainsaw rape scene which was extremely graphic to say the least."

"There's a good chance that next year the book will be included in a Shaun Hutson omnibus of half I did under other names, similar to King's *The Bachman Books* I suppose. The 25 pages will be restored in entirety."

"Have you ever regretted any of your worst gross out scenes - babies in microscopes for instance?"

"No never. There's not one single scene from all my books that I'd like to take out. Parts of *'NEMESIS'* for instance were very nasty to write about because they involved children. But it was right for that particular novel."

"There's nowhere you'd chase the list?"

"No, as long as it fits in with the plot and is necessary. There are things that it is not necessary to describe as with the beginning of *'NEMESIS'*. There was no need for me to describe the murder of a four year old girl because just the thought of that is horrific enough. It would be just overkill and (smiles) even I know that."

"Is there a novel that you would like to do but for personal or literary reasons you wouldn't do?"

"Well, I jumped out of bed one morning and felt like doing a Western novel; there'd be little good because there's no market for it. I'd be wasting my own time and that of the book company trying to sell it. But in answer to your question I've never decided against writing a book that I felt would fall into somewhere in the thriller/horror genres. The book I'm working on at the moment *'THE BUTCHERS WINDOW'* has only one death in it. It's about a stand up comedian who gets involved in an incredibly sinister and neurotic affair with a woman journalist. Again it scrapes the depths of depravity but is not disgusting in the sense that it was written to be such. Basically it's about obsession and the lengths that people will go to pursue it. Again it's an incredibly dark book and I honestly don't know how my readers will react to it. There's no way *'THE BUTCHERS WINDOW'* can go in the horror category if it does as will be only on my name and not on content. *'GRAVEYARD OF DREAMS'* the book to follow it again can't really be called a horror novel."

"Are there any plans to commit more Shaun

Hutson novels to celluloid. "SLUGS - THE MOVIE" not withstanding?"

"(Goes) there's still a persistent, horrible rumour that the same people who did *SLUGS* are going to do *BREEDING GROUND*, which something in the future. About a year ago *SPAWN* was optioned but due to budget problems hasn't got off the drawing board. At present I don't know of anything serious being done. I'd love to see *'RENEGADES'* filmed but to be honest I wouldn't like to get too closely involved with it. When you sell the rights to a book you know there's a 99% chance it's going to be a total cock up unless you're helping a Thomas Harris or something."

"Have you rated any of the film you've seen this year?"

"I loved *CAPTIVE* and *EPK*, was slightly disappointed in the year *ALIEN III* was a disappointment. A good last half an hour and was a really unexpected ending was about it. *BATMAN RETURNS* was better than the usual last king, *SLEEPWALKERS* was surprising, beyond belief."

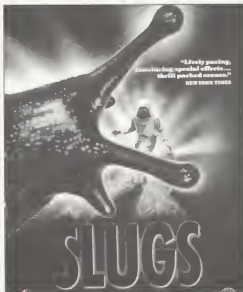
"Looking back from 'HEATHEN' to your first novel 'SLUGS' there is an obvious difference in your writing and content style. Do you view 'SLUGS' as a different novel?"

"In *'THE TEXAS KNIFE'* is the book which is the *SLUGS* in my opinion which came out in the *Bachman* era in my mind. *'SLUGS'* is a horror, (smiles) it's a horror in the true sense, one that it would not be a crime or my biggest selling and they're made a fuss out of it. It's a start in a better world. When people think of me it's usually in the terms of Shaun. Mike Mulligan, but it's not representative of the way I'm doing now. My publishers said that when



Mike Mulligan said that's the way I did do *'SLUGS'* but Mike's the only one I know but I would estimate it's the first *'HEATHEN'* is one of the most popular to be."

Shaun Hutson, who plays crazed gunmen, kills all psychos and gangsters. In the words of his groovy band Don Ayden: "He'll give a bad place to be."



"Lively goring, convulsing special effects... thrill-packed scenes..."
NEW YORK TIMES

THE MONSTER MOVIE OLDIE PICTURE SHOW

ADMIT ONE

Let's journey back to an era when each successive week the inhabitants of planet earth fought for survival against everything from radiation-mutated arachnids to extraterrestrial vegetables. Our destination - The Monster Movie Boom of the 1950's and 60's. So strap yourself in, get your 3D specs at the ready, and for God's sake.....keep watching the sky!!!!

THE BRAINIAC

aka EL BARON DEL TERROR MEXICO 1961

DIRECTED BY CHANO URETA

STARRING ABEL SALAZAR RUBEN ROJO GERMAN ROBLES ROSA MARIA GALLARDO RENE CARDONA ARIADNA WILTNER

More wacky Mexican paps from south of the border. I've seen some weird stuff over the years, but this is really something!

The film's producer Abel Salazar, takes the lead role as the evil Baron Violes, tortured and burned by the Mexican equivalent of the Spanish Inquisition for crimes relating to the practice of black magic and sorcery. The laughing Baron places a curse on the descendants of the inquisitors, promising them that some heinous atrocities will befall them in years to come.

1960's Mexico - a comet falls to earth in a barrel. From the movie debris emerges the 20th century Baron. Elegantly dressed in a dinner suit, the Baron now has pointed ears, a huge, hairy, inflatable head, arms that end in pinches and a two-foot tongue to boot! With a tongue like that the Baron is going to lead the ladies of all square vice interested in him and he proceeds to try his new found appendage out on the local whores. The first victim to fall foul of the tongue is a prostitute (Ariadna Wiltner) who succumbs to the Baron in his human form whilst moping around a seedy bar. Just as they are about to lose, the Baron's face changes into the huge hairy monster and out comes the tongue which is used to suck the brains from the victim! The Baron carries a small urn with him in which he keeps a handy supply of brains (i.e. a no doubt for later consumption).

The next seventy five minutes or so merely documents the Baron's revenge: the methodical killing of his victims in the bizarre manner of extracting their brains with the tongue. The Baron is eventually destroyed with a flame thrower, dying again in flames as he did at the start of the film.

Surprisingly enough, Ureta's approach to this film is one of straight faced hysteria. The whole concept is absurd in the extreme, but I think Ureta was totally serious when making this film. There is little or nothing in the way of intentional laughs but all comic relief is to be had at Ureta's expense. However, having said that, THE BRAINIAC is a very atmospheric film and oozes surrealism. Rene Cardona makes an appearance somewhere, it's probably short due to the absence of any female wrestling. The ludicrous special effects and comic book script often overshadow the stylish elements of the film which is a bit of a shame, but then again, would the film have had been as enjoyable

without the inflatable head and two foot tongue? Not! said!

Up into your favourite corn, close, keep the table stocked with ice cold bottles of Dos Equis cervezas and let your mind slowly disintegrate with the deluge of unearthy monstrosities on show. THE BRAINIAC. It will leave you aghast!

NICE BARTLETT

THE GIANT CLAW

USA 1952

DIRECTED BY FRED F. SEARS

STARRING JEFF MORROW, MARA CORAY, MORRIS ANKRAUM, EDGAR BARBER

Producer Sam Katzman must have gone off his hood when he produced this. Being long of back and 30's trash and producing such films as 'TEENAGE CRIME WAVE' and 'CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN' he came up with the idea of a giant chicken from outer space who has a lance field for protection and a taste for American planes.

Mara Coray (Playboy's Miss Oct 58) and Jeff Morrow are scientists out to stop this 'flying nightmare' from crushing New York and ruling the World. The bird is a big floppy puppet (hence showing what looks like it has just come off the set of the muppets). This, along with the astonishingly bad script and acting and the New York destruction scenes (stolen from EARTH VS THE FLYING SAUCERS - another Katzman film) make this a Must See.

After watching this I can guarantee that there won't be a dry eye in the house. It takes a hell of a lack of talent to make a film that is this crazy and to think that all the cast actually took it all seriously, which makes it even funnier to watch. Inane and thoroughly enjoyable!

GREG LAMB

THE KILLER SHREWS

USA 1959

DIRECTED BY RAY KELLOGG

STARRING JAMES BEST, INGRID GOUBE, BARUCH LUMET, KEN CURTIS, GORDON MCLENDON

We are greeted with yet another pot faced monologue informing us of the planet's most infamous creature - a beast that devours every morsel of its victims, even the bones! What else monster can this be? Well, after some atmospheric thunder and lightning, up roll the credits - THE KILLER SHREWS!

Yes, it's time to head off into ridiculous monster land once again. In this loopy adventure about genetic experimentation run amok resulting in an island teeming with well sized feroscous shrews! Unfortunately merboat captain Best has to shack up on the site for the night due to an impending hurricane, and we are soon plunged into a familiar (eye mutation as Best and his cohorts are trapped in the desolate research lab whilst an army of flesh hungry shrews gather outside).

THE KILLER SHREWS is a fine case in point of just what depths of basality the film-makers of the 1950's could plumb to in order to get onboard the creature feature bandwagon. The era certainly gave us some movie monsters, but these suckers just have to be seen! A mixture of thoroughly unconvincing puppets, and for the most part merely hapless cameras embroiled in rags to form an embarrassingly incompetent result. However there's an undeniable charm to such a movie now, and although the film is too silly by half, and the characters so one dimensional that when they are shown in profile they invariably disappear, (you just have to witness the acting, for choice of a better term: of its Miss Universe Ingrid Goube - a spectacle!) THE KILLER SHREWS unbelievably does have its moments, not least of which when the protagonists attempt their escape huddled inside a pinned of doors!

THE KILLER SHREWS was shot back to back, and put out on a double bill with THE GIANT GILA MONSTER, a superior monster mash. SHREWS has appearances from most of the production crew, and director Kellogg went on to helm the amazingly heavy-handed John Wayne Vietnam vehicle THE GREEN BERETS - a film which like THE KILLER SHREWS also found its way into Tim Healy's 'The World's Worst Movies' book - I suppose you just can't please all the people all the time!

JOHN HILL



you never know when the nibbles might strike!!!!

KILLER SHREWS

MONSTER A GO GO

USA 1965

DIRECTED BY BILL REBANE. ADDITIONAL FOOTAGE BY HERSCHELL GORDON LEWIS. STARRING PHIL MORTON, JUNE TRAVIS, GEORGE PERRY, LOIS BROOKE, HENRY HIGHT.

MONSTER A GO GO is a wild grade Z thriller with a fascinating pedigree. Starting off its life as TERROR AT HALFDAY under the direction of Bill Rebane, the man who would later go on to THE GIANT SPIDER INVASION (What a guy!), the film lay on the shelf uncompleted for some time until the Godfather of Gore himself H.G. Lewis picked it up in view to showing it out as a second on the bill feature to MIDWINTER MOUNTAIN. Adding extra footage and the most unfortunate deadpan narration since THE CREEPING TERROR, the film became MONSTER A GO GO, which as it stands is without doubt one of the few films which can suit shoulders with the worst of Ed Wood: it's about as much-planned as a nap!



What you are about to see may not even be possible... states the narrator by way of an introduction, and suddenly we're off into a devastating psychobronic journey detailing the exploits of an astronaut whose shuttle crashlands on Earth, and under the exposure of massive levels of radiation, he somehow mutates into a grotesque ten foot giant! Unusual stuff, as the plot comes and goes at whim, footage is crudely inserted, in fact it becomes fun trying to work out who put in what, one scene of a girl running out of gas and being helped by a friendly passer-by for instance, has absolutely nothing to do with the narrative whatever! The monologue continues "bodies were horribly mangled in a way never seen before... like dried punies", as our delirious astronaut goes on the rampage and learns much that his levels of radioactivity may be enough to contaminate anyone within a fifty mile radius! Chicago is duly evacuated, or at least we are told it is, all we witness are a couple of police cars patrolling the same empty multi-story car park, in an example of poverty row cinema technique which just has to be seen. As for the big finale, after a bout of making around sewers, well there isn't one... obviously the budget had been totally annihilated by this point, so we get an outrageously ambiguous ending, where the astronaut/giant/monster or

whatever it is, simply disappears... amazing! MONSTER A GO GO is yet another trash curiosity unsanitized by the near-legendary Sinister Cinema video label in the States, and if you think you've seen some turkeys, just track down the gem, you ain't seen nothing yet!

JOHN HILL

NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS

USA 1965

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL HOEY

STARRING MAMIE VAN DOREN, ANTHONY EISLEY, PAMELA MASON, BILL GRAY, BOBBY VAN.

Devotees of trash cinema, particularly those who saw fit to mail a dastardly lid to their homestead exterior in an attempt to capture various sludge oddities from outer space, should rightly kick themselves if they mistook this near-legendary caper when it turned up unmounted on the German RTL channel a while back.

It seems in mind the prize I viewed as indeed in short supply. Despite some guess-work was left over to fully tabern the plot extraneous to the best of my knowledge, in various places, yet no plants turn up in the Atlantic, and most of the crew aboard a United States naval ship, which dumps them off in a South Seas research station, where they duly go on the rampage.

NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS comes on like a warped DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, though manages to throw in some off-the-wall moments as a soldier getting his arm amputated by one of the fiendish flora. The film is competent enough (excepting an ineptly inserted stock attack reel, where onlookers grimace wildly... similarly at the film's close continuity collapses completely as further stock footage of bombing raids is wheeled out mercilessly, in fact in one scene it would appear the US navy armada team (the Blue Angels) is called upon to bomb the devilish plants).

What mainly brought about NIGHT MONSTER's cult status is its renowned exploitation cast, most notable being the voluptuous Van Doren, a Hollywood sex Goddess of trash movies, seen here in one of her last roles. Also coloured for the trip is lovely Anthony Easley, an actor who appeared with this in FRANKIE AND JOHNNY, and trooped his way through endless trash epics such as Ted V. Mikell's DOG SQUAD, Al Adamson's DRACULA V FRANKENSTEIN and a slew of David L. Hewitt productions including JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF TIME, THE WICHTY GORGA and something entitled MONSTROD - how odd!

As a footnote, foreign satellite channels have also opened up of late, Fred Olen Ray's T&A extravaganza BAD GIRLS FROM MARS, the amazing 50s oddity SHE DEMONS and even Larry Buchanan's CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE among its more staple diet of semi-clad Italian housewives. With the more predictable pay movie channels even underwriting the occasional gem, the uncult DERANGED and the 50s bag bag epic THE BLACK SCORPION to name but two, suddenly an in-depth look into 'what the shit' merits further investigation within these very pages... stay tuned!

JOHN HILL



MAMIE VAN DOREN SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

1953 FORBIDDEN DIR. RUDOLPH MATE
THE ALL AMERICAN DIR. ESSE HIBBS
1954 FRANCES JOINS THE WACS DIR. ARTHUR LUBIN
YANKEE PASHA DIR. JOSEPH PEVNEY
1955 AIN'T SHE BEHAVIN' DIR. EDWARD R. BROWNE
RUNNING WILD DIR. ABNER BIBBERMAN
1956 THE SECOND GREATEST SEX DIR. GEORGE MARSHALL
STARIN THE DUST DIR. CHARLES HAAS
THE GIRL IN BLACK STOCKINGS DIR. HOWARD W. KOCH
1957 UNTAMED YOUTH DIR. HOWARD W. KOCH
1958 TEACHER S.P.E.T. DIR. GEORGE SEATON
HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL (AKA YOUNG HELLIONS) DIR. JACK ARNOLO
1959 GUNS, GIRLS AND GANGSTERS DIR. EDWARD CAHN
THE BEAT GENERATION (AKA THIS REBEL AGE) DIR. CHARLES HAAS
GIRLS TOWN (AKA INNOCENT AND THE DAMNED) DIR. CHARLES HAAS
BORN RICKLESS DIR. HOWARD W. KOCH
THE BIG OPERATOR (AKA ANATOMY OF A SYNDICATE) DIR. CHARLES HAAS
THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ADAM AND EVE DIR. ALBERT ZUGSMITH AND MICKY ROONEY
PIR 5, HAWANA DIR. EDWARD CAHN
1960 SEX KITTENS GO TO COLLEGE (AKA THE BEAUTY AND THE ROBOT/BEAUTY AND THE BRAIN) DIR. ALBERT ZUGSMITH
COLLEGE CONFIDENTIAL DIR. ALBERT ZUGSMITH
VICE RAID DIR. EDWARD CAHN
1961 THE CANDIDATE DIR. ROBERT ANGUS
THREE NUTS IN SEARCH OF A BOLT DIR. TOMMY NOONAN
1965 LAS VEGAS HILLBILLIES DIR. ARTHUR C. PERCE
THE NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS DIR. MICHAEL HOEY
1967 YOU'VE GOT TO BE SMART DIR. ELIUS KADISON
1968 VOYAGE TO THE PLANET OF PREHISTORIC WOMEN DIR. DEREK THOMAS (PETER BOGDANOVICH)
1966 FREE WIDE DIR. TOM TROBICH

COMPILED BY MARK HOCKLEY

SHORTCUT TO TERROR

THE FILMS OF CURTIS HARRINGTON

By Mark Hockley

Born in 1928 in Los Angeles, Curtis Harrington first took a serious interest in film making in his teens, producing many experimental shorts in films and libraries, their titles including *THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER* (1942), *FRAGMENT OF SEEKING* (1946), *PICNIC* (1948), *DANGEROUS HOUSES* (1952) and *THE WORMWOOD STAR* (1955). His break through into mainstream films came when he landed a job as executive assistant to producer Jerry Wald (*ACROSS THE PACIFIC*, *KEY LARGO*, *PEYTON PLACE*), going on to become an associate

producer. His hypnotic eyes a memorable image, the cast also included John Saxon and Dennis Hopper but the actors had little to do and it is particularly sad to see the great Basil Rathbone reduced to such a dreary role. Unfortunately, Rathbone was to go through almost exactly the same process when he was retained for *VOYAGE TO THE PREHISTORIC PLANET* (1965), which was actually released first, again using Russian footage. Harrington writing and directing under the pseudonym of John Sebastian. More a curiosity than a decent movie this was a fine example of Roger Corman's opportunism.

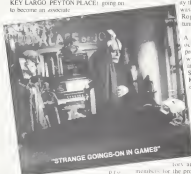
A change of direction occurred with his next project, *GAMES* (1967) written by Gene Kearney and starring James Caan, Simone Signoret and Katherine Ross. This oddity explores the lives of a bored couple who involve an older woman in bizarre sex and death games resulting in many plot twists. Although certainly unusual, *GAMES* is also often quite tedious, the characters perforce love and unloving. Cast members for the production also featured were Florence Marly, Don Stroud, Kern Smith and Luana Anders.

Harrington moved into television at the end of the sixties and was to spend the seventies alternating between feature films and TV movies, the first of which *HOW AWFUL ABOUT ALLAN* (1970) starred Anthony Perkins as a blind young man tormented by strange voices and guilt over his father's death. Destined to be unfairly compared with *PSYCHO* because of the Perkins connection this was an adequate time filler but something of a disappointment considering the talent involved, with supporting performances provided by Julie Harris, Joan Hackett and Kern Smith. Looking for a new slant on the grand guignol horror melodramas of *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE*, Harrington next cast Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters as the mothers of convicted murderers who open a dancing school for children in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN*

(1973). Set in the 1930's and capturing the period rather well, things begin to go wrong when Reynolds falls for a Texan millionaire (Dennis Weaver), triggering homicidal behaviour from Winters. This film marked the beginning of a trend for Harrington, his subsequent work for the most part also period set and although his productions have never been particularly strong script-wise, the production values have always appeared high and certainly convincing.

Following the reasonably successful *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN* he then quickly produced the memorably titled *WHO SLEW ANTIE ROO* (1971) again with Shelley Winters as star this time set in the 1920's and filmed in England. An excellent supporting cast bolstered the at times floundering screenplay (whose writers included Hammer regular Jimmy Sangster and *DR. PHIBBS RISES AGAIN* co-author Robert Blies), notably Lorna Jeffries, Ralph Richardson, Hugh Griffith and Michael Gothard. Child star Mark Lester of *OLIVER!* and Chloe Franks (*TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, *THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD*) portrayed two orphans menaced by the evil Winters, the inspiration for the story the fairytale, 'Hansel and Gretel'.

THE KILLING KIND made in 1973 is a little seen psycho drama with John Savage as a young man returning home after serving a prison sentence for a crime he did not commit and seeking vengeance on those he holds responsible. Primarily a character study of a psychotic with a mother complex, punctuated by the expected moments of violence, it has a valid performance by Savage, with support from Ann Sothern, Ruth Roman and Cindy Williams, but remains rather depressing and flat.



pro-ducer at Fox in 1955. But it was't until 1965 that he actually fulfilled his ambition and directed a full length feature, beginning his long career as a horror/films specialist.

NIGHT TIDE was a low budget production also written by Harrington concerning a sailor (played by Dennis Hopper) on leave in a small California seaside resort. Whilst there he becomes obsessed with an orphan girl who plays a ruminant at a sideshow. The problem is, she believes herself to be a descendant of a race of sea creatures who must kill during the full moon. Made in black and white, *NIGHT TIDE* attains an almost surreal atmosphere and was quite an auspicious debut with a promise of greater things to come, the film achieving a cult status and remaining popular today. At this point a certain Roger Corman who had acquired a Russian movie entitled *PLANET BURA* (*PLANET OF STORMS*), hired Harrington to write a script to utilise some of the footage. So with a budget of \$65,000, Harrington began his second feature as director, *QUEEN OF BLOOD* (1966). The story he came up with has Dr Faraday (Basil Rathbone) sending an expedition to Mars to rescue a crashed spaceship, only to find a green-skinned survivor who turns out to be a vampire. The biggest plus point for the film was actress Florence Marly who played the bloodsucker as a silent producer,



Returning to T.V., Harrington made a trio of chills during the next two years, the first, *THE CAT CREATURE* (1973), an interestingly old-fashioned mystery written by Robert Bloch, attempting to recapture the spirit of the 1940's Val Lewton pictures. The leads played by David (THE FLY) Hedison, Meredith Baxter and Stuart Whitman were merely passable, but it is the supporting cast which provides most of the interest with John Carradine, Gale Sondergaard, Kye Lake, Kent Smith and John Abbot all featured prominently. This was immediately followed by *THE KILLER BEES* (1974), a predictable affair in which the legendary Gloria Swanson, making a rare later day appearance, played the matriarch of a family which raises hives of an unusual Alaskan bee. The twist is that she has a strange telepathic link with the critters and uses them for her own evil designs. This is probably the weakest of Harrington's made for T.V. movies and the rest of the cast were hardly inspiring (Kate Jackson, Edward Albert, Roger Davis).

Superior, but still not really rising above the level of conspiracy, is *THE DEAD DON'T DIE* (1974), a tribute to the poverty-row horrors of the 1930's. Corpses just won't stay dead and zombies are everywhere in this Robert Bloch scripted thriller and Harrington does at times capture the mood of the old black and white horror movies, the authentic period look a major asset, but he is let down by a stolid performance by George Hamilton in the lead and an antic plot. The rest of the cast (Ray Milland, Jean Blondell, Ralph Meeker, Linda Crystal, Reggie Nalder) fare better but the end result is still disappointing.

Bidding to gain a commercial hit on the big screen he next directed *RUBY* (1977), an offbeat tale of the owner of a drive-in theatre who was once a gangster's moll. But her new dead lover's spirit returns years later and possesses her daughter. This is basically a genre hybrid, a kind of bizarre marrying of THE EXORCIST and BONNIE AND CLYDE. Piper Laurie stars as the mother, (she had played Sissy Spacek's mom in *CARRIE* the year before), with Janet Baldwin as her daughter, Stuart Whitman and Roger Davis. Although Harrington was actually fired from this production, it finished by Stephanie Rothman, in many ways this film is typical of his work, inventive on the surface but fundamentally derivative and ultimately lackluster.

1978 saw him make another of



"IT'S WORSE THAN THAT, SHE'S GOT A LAMP-SHADE ON HER HEAD CAPTAIN." (QUEEN OF BLOOD)

his workman-like T.V. movies, this time echoing the same years. *ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA* (AKA: DRACULA'S DOG) with DEVIL DOG THE HOUND OF HELL. In this one, the family pet, a satanic dog, terrorises a suburban family led by Richard Crenna and Yvette Mimieux. The result is exactly what you might expect without any real surprises and few thrills.

Since this consistent period of work, Harrington has made very few films and on the odd occasion when he has returned to directing, such as the lamentable *MATA HARE* (1984) with Sylvia Kristel, it might have been better if he had not bothered at all.

What began as a promising career, in the end, never really amounted to very much and the name of Curtis Harrington is unlikely to be high on the list of anyone's favourite directors', but even so, his films endure, surviving for those with the inclination to track them down and who know's, perhaps he will yet re-emerge.

But until then, I can't help feeling that he was a film maker too fond of using tried and trusted ingredients, his films rarely truly innovative. There is no substitute for originality. Too many directors are not the way to get ahead.



"OPEN WIDE SONNY!" (WHO SLEW AUNTIE ROO)

QUEEN OF BLOOD

USA 1966

DIRECTED BY CURTIS HARRINGTON

STARRING JOHN SAXON, BABS RATHBONE, JUDI MEREDITH, DENNIS HOPPER, FLORENCE MARLEY

As outlined in the main list, *QUEEN OF BLOOD*, Harrington's second feature was based around some particularly impressive Soviet science-fiction footage acquired by Roger Corman. (The original home of said footage is somewhat uncertain and could equally be from an unfinished project named *NIERO ZOWIE* circa 1959). Although hampered by such obvious pitfalls as having to create a coherent plot around existing material, it is to Harrington's credit as both director and screenwriter that *QUEEN OF BLOOD* stands as such an accomplished endeavour.

Set in 1990 where a mysterious alien craft crashlands on Mars, a rescue squad headed by John Saxon is dispatched to investigate, discovering a living female extraterrestrial who shows her true colours (green!) by revealing herself to be an alien bloodsucking queen, sent to the planet as a deliberate ploy to get to earth and take over our world.

Sure *QUEEN OF BLOOD* is relatively unimpeccable pulp SF trash, but it is handled with sufficient flair and rendered with such a high quota of atmosphere that it far belies its dubious roots. The lush colours of the Russian footage furnish the film with a genuinely alien character, and visually the film falls somewhere between *BARBARELA* and *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. Elements of the plot seem curiously familiar in such contemporary works as *ALIEN* and especially the early parts of *LIFEFORCE*, whether this film was an actual influence is questionable, but probable.

With an incredible cast of genre stalwarts the legendary Forest J Ackerman is even in there as well. *QUEEN OF BLOOD* is recommended viewing, being one of the most visually striking sci-fi pieces of the era along with *Bava's PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES*, and is a good starting point for those interested in unravelling Harrington's hit and miss career.

JOHN HILL

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ORIENT EXCESS

Ken Miller (editor of *Imaginer*) and Rick Baker (from *Eastern Heroes* magazine) have been organising mini film festival's at London's notorious flea-bit, the Scala, for a while now, mostly screening oriental movies, with the occasional western effort thrown in for good measure, so when good old Ken was kind enough to send along some complimentary tickets, I decided it was time to head down to the Big Smoke to see just what was going on, and the following are my humble thoughts on it all.

There's no denying the fact, like it or not, that oriental movies are the films in vogue at the moment amongst hardcore horror addicts, whether this is a passing fad or not, will only be seen with the passage of time, but I for one feel that the Italian element of it all is a rather prominent feature to these films. Current pop larmy in other words (if you ain't in you just ain't hip man). Rather like the cult popularity of the Italian horror scene in the late 70s/early 80s, the Hong Kong horror movement fields similar screen tactics with minimal plots, startling visuals, unusual ideas and extreme violence. In other words chaos over quality. There are obvious exceptions to this fundamental outline, both in the Hong Kong and Italian scenes, but their initial likeness is over-whelming. One thing in the oriental scenes favour is the diversity of styles, ranging from hectic bloodshed films such as *THE KILLER* dealing with gangster, triads, police and relationships, but doused in a canyons of ultra-violent gun-play, to Chinese horror (for example the *MR VAMPIRE* series, which portray traditional oriental scare philosophies - most of which come across very different to our westernised concepts). To more traditional fare (*ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA*) to other old school shots such as straightforward martial arts mayhem (starring the likes of Jackie Chan, Andy Lau etc) through futuristic science fiction nightmares (*TECHNICAL*) and then we're off into other culture's film-making tactics such as Japan's super violent anime (*CAITORS*) and the like. Whether this cross-section of film production should be covered under one banner is highly arguable, but the current interest generated by such material is undeniable, and certainly 90% of the material you are likely to see will feature either extreme violence or spectacular action, so in any given film there will be something of interest, to the unimpaired gorehound/action junkie. I myself find that your average Hong Kong horror/anal extremity call it what you will, can usually be summed up by this ratio - 75% dialogue/general oriental antics that go above most westerners' heads, and 25% action/violence - therefore if you take this as the common thread, you can deduce how good/bad any given film is. Even with the best oriental output (*THE KILLER* for example) you will usually find some offputting quantity, in the case of the hectic bloodshed films it is the mawkish sentimentality which comes across as alien to hardened western audiences. However, saying this, most oriental features carry something of interest amongst their running time, it is just that you have to wade through a lot of sub-standard fluff to get to the juicy stuff - still, I remain one of the converted, and remain in something of a minority standpoint, so let's see



A report from the film extremes festival (Scala Cinema, King's Cross, London, Sunday, August 9th 1992) by JOHN HILL

what was on offer to tempt me into conversion!

A BETTER TOMORROW (HK 1987) was the film that I suppose launched the whole hectic bloodshed bid, and is widely regarded as one of the orient's greatest commodities. Converging the combined talents of HK superstars Tsui Hark and John Woo with box-office hero in the making Chow Yun Fat, this story of loyalty, betrayal and brotherly love is undoubtedly engaging, although rather somewhat, if like me you were introduced to the sub-genre via *THE KILLER*, a similar though superior film. The story weaves itself around two brothers, each on different sides of the law, and how their lifestyles ultimately come to a tangent. Chow Yun Fat who looks cool as hell is the outsider who brings them together and indeed gets to wreak most of the film's incredible havoc. Obviously it is director Woo's ability to stage outstanding feats of destruction and Sane Peckinpah style gun-play which brought this film notoriety. Like most films of this ilk however, A BETTER TOMORROW gets too bogged down with its oriental themes of honour and sentimentality, and the

ending song brought howls of hysteria from a crowd of converted such as these. Despite this though, this is certainly one of the better HK actioners, although still earning a 6/10 ratio. Two sequels followed, both unleashed in the UK.

In between films it was time to wonder the distant recesses of the infamous Scala a venue renowned worldwide for its depraved on-screen subject matter. Talking of which, away from the perfectly legitimate merchandise being dished by the organisers in the foyer, over in the darkest corners of the cinema certain individuals who shall remain nameless were peddling an alarming number of what we say tactically, less readily available wares. Far be it from me to suggest that Mr Pold hasn't exactly catered the underground blackmarket in pirate films during his recent rack, but one wonders otherwise when some unknown SS lurkers up to nood displaying SS

DEPENDING CAMP for a lesser. The nerve of these opportunists amazed me, especially in the current climate, so a word of warning to one and all, for when I was offered a copy of a certain SF blockbuster for ten notes, and proudly declared: Away with you - it's ALIEN 3 on the big screen for me sir! not only was I being highly sensible, but doubly so, once an inside contact revealed not only were such prints hardening an unworkable, but they didn't even fit onto the tape. The endings were missing! Apparently, if you were one of the top-all artists involved, said contact informs me you might be getting a knock on your door very shortly! Enough of these meanderings - on with the show!

SAVIOUR OF THE SOUL (HK 1991) is unusual, may it's worse than that, in downright weird! Oriental mysticism and martial arts combine in a modern day version of ZU WARRIORS mutated with a twisted odyssey of BIKELANDER! The plot I must admit eluded me, but certainly includes plenty of action of the flying variety. Andy Lau once again gets to battle all and sundry. Some of the action is overly graphic, particularly in the opening sequence where the main baddie Silver Fox infiltrates a building full of machine-gun toting security guards, and proceeds to dispatch the lot - one even gets cleaved straight down the middle! Even, funny in places, now the Scala sound system rarely sounds better and confusing in the extreme, SAVIOUR OF THE SOUL, directed by Yuen Kwai achieves a reasonably average 7/10 ratio.

After another wonder around the crowded foyer exhorted by the likes of Kim Newman, Steve C. of the Film and his identical twin Alan Jones (well they're both bald!) it was time to stock up with beer and back into the darkness for at least two thirds of Tsui Hark's ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA (HK 1991) before British Rail timetables dictated my departure. This one was to me at least the least interesting of the lot as it had no fantasy elements or violent gangster, just very clever and quick martial artistry. Set during the time of European encroachment into China, the film stars Jet Li who gets to run around a lot. Undoubtedly well shot and cleverly choreographed I'm afraid this sort of thing holds very limited appeal for me - give me MONEY anyday!

And that was it, off I went into the early evening gloom, still no more a fan of the hot and miss Hong Kong scene than before, still I had enjoyed the experience and must thank Ken for the opportunity to go along, and if he feels like inviting me again next time I won't object too strongly!

SURVIVAL



Quest

THE PLIGHT OF THE ANDES CANNIBALS by Michael Slatter

The story of the Andes survivors is much more than just one of modern-day cannibalism, it is also quite firmly about companionship, stamina, community and, above all, courage.

It began on 12th October 1972, when an amateur rugby team set off from their home in Uruguay to a friendly game in Chile, in a specially chartered Air Force F4U F227. Of the 45 travellers, most in their early twenties, 15 were the team, 25 their friends and relations, and five crew. At about 3.30pm on the 13th (a Friday), as they flew over the Andes, the right wing of the plane hit one of the mountains, cutting off the back end of the fuselage as it spiralled away, taking with it the navigator, steward and three of the players, still strapped to their seats. As the left wing broke off, its propeller ripping into the plane's side, what was left of the fuselage slid on its belly down the mountainside, and as it came to a crunching halt near a ledge, all the seats came free from their mountings, crushing those sitting in front. Now in sub-zero temperatures, it was found that three of the remaining passengers had died immediately and the rest were tended, as best they could, by two medical students. One of the boys had a piece of steel bar protruding from his stomach and when one of the students wrenched it free, he brought six inches of intestine with it. Many passengers had broken limbs and all were in deep shock. In the cockpit, the pilot was dead and the co-pilot was raving and stuck fast - the radio was damaged beyond repair. Those fit enough extracted wreckage from inside the plane and, as freezing snow began to fall, 32 survivors prepared for a sleepless night.

In the morning, they found themselves almost slap bang in the middle of the Andes, about 11,500 feet up and surrounded on all sides by huge mountains. Four more people had died during the night, including the co-pilot, and one more that morning. Meanwhile, search parties from both sides of the border, sent out immediately, were being hampered by bad weather and would never be successful anyway because the pilot, in his last message, had seriously miscalculated their position. After two weeks, all official search parties were called off, leaving only stubborn relatives to carry on their own fruitless expeditions.

On the ninth day in the aeroplane, their meagre food rations finally ran out, and with the death of one of the

boy's sister, the decision to eat their dead companions was taken. One of the students, with a piece of broken glass, cut 20 slivers of meat from a corpse, perfectly preserved in the snow, and left them on top of the plane to dry in the sun. Now the deed was done, nobody wanted to be the first to eat it, but their dreadful hunger gradually forced them out one by one. They didn't chew the meat and many were sick the first time. When the weather was fair, they were able to get a fire together and found the meat more palatable when cooked - "softer than beef but with exactly the same taste" - though it was pointed out that meat, when cooked, not only shrinks but loses much of its valuable proteins, also that material for fires was running low, so they reverted to eating it raw.

On the seventeenth day, October 29, just as the 27 survivors had settled down to a semblance of sleep, a huge avalanche pushed freezing snow into the hole at the end of the fuselage, easily tearing down the flimsy wall of cushions and blankets. After digging themselves out, it was found that seven boys, and the last female, were dead. A second avalanche completely covered the plane over, so they were now cut off from the outside. A blizzard blew for three days above them and after two, having eaten nothing, some of the boys began cutting up those who had died in the avalanche for food. Eventually, they managed to dig themselves out, and the only thought on their minds for the next few weeks was escape. They tried a few "expeditions" in the surrounding area, one even finding the tail end of the plane, but the death of a further three boys, from the gangrenous condition of their legs, hastened their efforts.

As summer kicked in to the Andes around mid-November, another problem presented itself - the hot sun began melting the snow, thawing out the corpses, causing them to rot. Bodies became hard to find and soon meat was rationed. At one time "they tried to eat the tongue off one corpse but could not swallow it, and one of them ate the testicles". Brains, too, were eaten for the first time. Consequently, in the first week of December, three of the hardest boys set out for freedom, though one later turned back through exhaustion. As well as extra meat rations, they used "shoes" made from the elbows of the dead. It took them ten days of travelling before they caught sight of their first snow-free ground, a valley where, exhausted and more dead than alive, they were seen by Chilean peasants

and taken to the authorities, seventy days after the plane had crashed. When the remaining survivors were rescued, it soon emerged about their abnormal eating habits, but most people, including the victim's relatives, were sympathetic to them as their story became a scandal all over the world. Naturally, the media gave blanket coverage to the story, though the boys wouldn't give private interviews, and, indeed, the first books appeared less than a year later.

It is impossible here to illustrate the fortitude and courage of the 16 survivors, both during and after their ordeal, but any of the books mentioned here are recommended for the more emotional aspects of the story.

THEY LIVED ON HUMAN FLESH by Enriquez Hank Lopez (published 10/73) belies its lurid title and tasteless cover of a half eaten human arm by being a very interesting well written account of the events. True, many of the incidents related here seem to occur at different times to those in the other books - he also erroneously suggests the survivors hung meat up to dry *inside* the plane - but where this book's strengths lie is in the concentration on the aftermath of the story. Over half of the book is concerned with the moral stance of cannibalism and the way in which the survivors were treated by the media. In this way it manages to not only be a good read, but also a different one. The standard photos purport to show dismembered limbs outside the aeroplane, but they are so fuzzy, much imagination is needed to work them out.

SURVIVE! by Clay Blair Jr, also published in 1973, could never be faulted for a lack of facts - every single little thing is noted here. Again, it is different to the other books, as much more background is illustrated, particularly of the passengers and crew, but also of the rugby team, the Andes and the subject of cannibalism, making comparisons to the case of the Donner Party in 1846, American travellers in the Old West, cut off by snow (recently immortalised in the TV movie **DONNER PASS THE ROAD TO SURVIVAL**). Blair's book is not as well written as the others, it is very stand-offish and impersonal, but is still a fine companion volume. He does add an extra story at the end of the book about the father of one of the dead boys who returned to the site of the crash to recover his son's body (not one of those eaten). When he brought it down from the mountain he was arrested for graverobbing (all the bodies and remains had been mass buried by the rescuers) and it took several weeks before he could persuade the authorities to let him bury the body in Uruguay. The photos here are similar to those in the previous book, but much clearer - severed limbs being all too obvious.

ALIVE by Piers Paul Read (1974). Although Read has obviously tried to go for a more subtle approach, i.e. no gruesome photographs, his gross descriptions of the meat eating rituals betray otherwise. This is, however, the best and most personal of the books because the author was given the opportunity to speak to every survivor personally and received their full permission to print all. His maps are

certainly the most useful (curiously, all the books have different maps) and naturally, more of the pain and suffering of the survivors seeps into the writing. Also, what occasionally slips out is the odd passage suggesting that the human meat-eating became a very blasé experience: (after the avalanche) "when the survivors came in at night, they would leave a limb or a portion of a torso on the 'porch' in case the weather the next day made it impossible for them to go out", "...they laughed when Coche Indarte stretched up to fetch something from the hat rack and brushed his face against a lifeless hand which had been brought in to stave off hunger in the night" They ate up to a pound of meat a day (Blair suggests one body every three days).

The film of the story was made in 1975 by Mexican exploitation veteran Rene Cardona. Based on, and with the same title as, Blair's book, it's a relatively faithful adaptation, though a few events occur out of sequence and a lot of the 'meat' (sorry) of the story is lost in the translation of book to film. Characterisation is nil, one person looks much the same as another, and the acting is of the very wooden variety, obviously not helped by bad dubbing. The actual act of cannibalism is pretty gruesome but not especially lingered on, so it's not terribly exploitive. It all ends very suddenly and leaves one feeling that there should have been more.

It is rumoured that Spielberg cohort Frank Marshall (**ARACHNOPHOBIA**) is planning to make a new version of the story for Disney - the mind boggles!

▼ OASIS - Another film influenced by the incident



THE LOST WORLD



DEMENTIA 13

USA 1963

DIRECTED BY FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

STARRING WILLIAM CAMPBELL, LUANA ANDERS, BART PATTON, MARY MITCHELL, PATRICK MAGEE

This was the second film by Francis Ford Coppola as writer and director (his debut *TONIGHT FOR SURE* made in 1961 doesn't always appear in his credits) and although the plot involves such familiar elements as murder, insanity and guile, enough style and originality has been injected into the proceedings to make *DEMENTIA 13* an interesting movie.

Made in 1963 for Roger Corman and shot in Ireland, Coppola manages to create a moody atmosphere. As an axe murderer stalks members of a noble Irish family, the ancestral castle becoming a killing ground. Shot in black and white and undistinctly beset by two of them is some nice photography from Charles Harnswell which compliments Coppola's headstrong direction - a compelling score by Ronald Stein enhancing this effect. There are also several notable set pieces, most strikingly the long, slow build up to Luana Anders' death by the lake.

As far as performances go, Patrick Magee dominates the film with his eccentric, possibly involuntarily portrayed of the family doctor, the other cast members including William Campbell (from Corman's *BLOOD BATH*) adequate, but unimpaired.

It will prove interesting to see how this low budget effort compares with Coppola's forthcoming, multi-million dollar production of *DRACULA*, but on the strength of this early work, he might well produce something of quality.

MARK HOCKLEY

KITCHEN SINK

NEW ZEALAND 1969

DIRECTED BY ALISON MACLEAN

STARRING THERESA HEALEY, PETER TAIT

A weird Anitipodean short (20m) with effective monochrome photography and strange music.

by the dreadful *Headless Chickens*. A woman finds a hair in her sink and as she pulls it gets bigger and bigger until her sink begins to bulge. Eventually, she pulls out a seemingly dead lioness all covered in black hair which she puts in the bath. As she goes to answer the phone the bath overflows and the lioness turns into a full grown man. She shaves all his hair and puts him in her bed, but he never moves, so she puts him in a bin bag. He comes to life and she tries to kill him with a razor. He overpowers her and embraces and kisses her. She notices a large hair growing from the back of his neck and as she begins to pull it, he starts screaming.

Well, what the bloody hell was that all about? I'm not really up on symbolism but it obviously has something to do with women's struggle against man. Tied to the kitchen sink via a mythical cord which the man whom she pampers, pays no attention to her unless it is in a violent way, the final scene displaying her rebellion against him. Hm! The film itself is professionally shot and has some gross effects as the woman struggles to pull the hairy embryo from the sink. I know I know it's symbolic of both and at the risk of offending millions of women, both its pretty gross Australian feminist editor Ann Thompson has a credit for special effects.

MICHAEL SLATTERY

METAMORPHOSIS: THE ALIEN FACTOR

aka DEADLY SPAWN II

USA 1990

DIRECTED BY GLENN TACKAKIAN

STARRING TARA LEICIE AND TONY GIGANTE

A scientist who is experimenting with mutants spawned from a piece of alien organism is infected by the substance and a metamorphosis begins.

As with the much cheaper (\$40,000) *DEADLY SPAWN* this movie is pretty much an excuse for some monster FX work, with the same lack of acting ability on the part of the leads and so

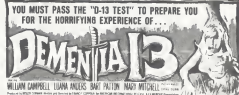
to direction. However, just like the original *SPAWN* movie, *METAMORPHOSIS* is a fun picture because the creature work is so watchable and the red stuff flows abundantly. As the story unfolds, at first via flashbacks, we are presented with a number of novel creatures. A hapdial, goggle-eyed critter is the first creation to grab your attention - this is the creature which infects the scientist when it bites him. Once the scientist starts to transform, the unfortunate man turns into a red, raw, blood-necked monstrosity that unleashes flying tentacles (a la *Capeknight's THE THING*) and even ejects eyeballs with teeth! Yes, you heard it right, the monster acquires the ability to eject small balls of flesh that are nearly a set of teeth with a poison stinger in the centre (it is explained that like a bee, once the venom is injected, the mouth expels). Finally the scientist totally transforms into a gaudy, alien head which runs amok down the corridors of the Tolos company's building, lacking eyes but being in possession of lots of teeth, as was the original alien in *DEADLY SPAWN*. This monster somewhat resembles a toothy pen with a tension pulled back. Still able to eject the tooth-balls, it also can emit grasping tentacles and has some sturdy legs. A fine mixture of full scale animation, FX work and model animation, this creature is a decent addition to the alien critter genre. But even this beast is overshadowed by the brief appearance of an animated mutant in more evolved version of the hapdial creature seen at the start during the finale. A blobby thing with a multitude of branching limbs, this creature is a fine example of the sort of imaginatively designed animation model so rarely used (most animation models tend to be dinosaur related).

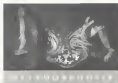
Script wise, the film isn't up to much, it simply rehashes ideas and images taken from such films as *THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT* and *THE THING*. The film also doesn't explain why later victims of the alien's bite don't transform into mutants as the scientist did. Also, why weren't the characters who were attacked by the tooth-balls killed by the venom the balls supposedly injected into them? As I've already stated, the script isn't in this particular movie's strong points, but who cares when the film boasts LOTS of monster footage and sequences of blood letting and alien-slapping?

Wasting the fact that movie animator Ray Harryhausen is still influencing up-and-coming also folk is an end credits note which actually says that the animation crew on this film owe a debt of gratitude to Ray. Also of course, there's the name of the secret organisation in the film, Tolos, which was the name of the bronze giant in Harryhausen's *PASION AND THE ARGONAUTS*. I don't think that Ray would like all of the gore on show in this picture, but I'm sure he'd appreciate the nicely weird animation model used at the end.

If you're a movie monster fan, this is essential viewing.

KEVIN MILLER





MONSTER AND THE STRIPPER

USA 1974

DIRECTED BY RICH ORWONO
STARRING MC NARO, GEORGETT DANTE,
EDWARD H MCINTOSH, DONNA RAYE, SLEEPY
LABRE

Grievous man! After a parade of Italy horror cinema, an "excited" director towards this genuinely obscure entry, which is concept-wise by its absence from most reference sources. An outlandish sleaze-fest, filmed in a New Orleans strip joint run by the mob, this trash caper centres on the search for a different act to enliven the show at the shuddering club and gives what the owners have in mind - the legendary swamp-dwelling from the nearby wetlands!

Basically **MONSTER AND THE STRIPPER** is a film of three segments, the opening strip club show, the hunt for the monster middle segment, and the ultimate gloriously sleazy amalgam of both stories. You may think it would be impossible for any film to live up to such a flimsy title, but undeniably this "swinging" film pulls it off - and how!

See a double-jointed exotic dancer named Titania! Witness a bent painter forced to swallow a cocktail of tag-bugs and phlegm! Marvel at the spectacle of a senior citizen stripper in her long johns! Revel in the titanic, cat-fight of the two female leads! Attempt to keep a straight face as the swamp beast who looks for all the world like Terry Scott in **CARRY ON UP THE JUNGLE** wrenches off a hunter's arm and beats him to death with it! Experience a live peck show as a chicken has its head bitten off, and innards devoured! Thrill to some classic lines of dialogue as "My God his pants are torn out!" or "A young lady who will twitch a and twotch it, and stand there and let you watch it!" Shriek in terror as the monster crushes the corrupt club entrepreneur's (a man who is a deadweight for Joe Spinel?) head "like a ripe water melon!" In short go out of your way to see this gaudy masterpiece which comes at like Opportunity Knocks on particularly bad weed. Or maybe I dreamt the whole thing? Apologies for missing to an Anglo-Saxon expression, but this film is unfucking-believable! "Real dandy!"

STEVE 'BAD TRIP' CHAMBERS

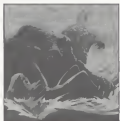
MONSTROID

USA 1979

DIRECTED BY HERBERT L STROCK
STARRING JOHN CARRADINE, JIM MITCHEM, ANTHONY ENISEY, PHIL CAREY, CORINNE MCORE

Monstroid, a somewhat under-known, is actually *both* VHS/DVD MONSTER (1980) & a further monster movie with some rather dubious credentials. Credited as a 1979 offering under the direction of Strock (THE CRAWLING HAND, HEAVY DO MAKE A MONSTER), the film was first mentioned under its original moniker of **MONSTER** in 1975 under the direction of Andy Farn, with different cast and characters. Added to the mysterious origins of the movie Michael Weldon's excellent guide *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia Of Film* credits it as being an Italian production! Whatever, this effort should find a place into the heart of all devotees of macabre monster movies.

"The story you are about to see is based on fact. The incident occurred in June 1971 in Columbia." Yeah right, nevertheless what we have here is a typically wooden sevensies yarn (the labours tend to imply real sevensies rather than later) that manages to incorporate a pollution plot into its rubber creature on the rampage scenario. Mysterious happenings in a Columbian village bring the arrival of troublemaker Bill Travis who is working for the American conglomerate whose local current works seem to be at the root of the problem. The village is inhabited by endless stereotypes and stock characters including a local looking John Cassidine as a priest, and an American TV reporter who seems to be filming everything that happens for some unspecified reason. However, after villagers meet untimely ends and others go unaccounted for, it transpires that the root of such local deaths, is actually a giant prehistoric creature which lives in the local lake! This thing, is tacky beyond words, and looks like an enormous snake with a reptilian moustache. Eventually in a rousing finale the beast is lured to the surface with a dead sheep (it) and attacked with home-made depth-charges much to the delight of the local populace who look on, mugging shamelessly.



MONSTROID is swathedly inadequate, but rarely has a dull moment, for example if you find yourself twiddling your thumbs at the dinosaur antics there's also a bout of exorcism and witch-burning to enliven the proceedings. The cast of scenery-chewers, do what they know best, and at one point Irish veteran Ensey (see **NAVY V THE NIGHT MONSTERS** review elsewhere) utters the line "I feel like a movie star!" Useful! Oh and there's also a gloriously uninspired egghead "surprise" ending. Originally released on the Intervention label, you might be able to sneath this turkey at a car-bait sale or something, should you so desire.

JOHN HILL

MURDERS IN THE ZOO

USA 1981

DIRECTED BY EDWARD SUTHERLAND
STARRING FRONTE ATWILL, CHARLES KINGSLEY, LINDA PATRICK, RANDOLPH SUELT, JOHN LANGE, KATHLEEN BURKE, JAMES BERNARD, EDWARD MCWADDE

Definitely one of the best-plotted movies of the 80s and like the same strange **ISLAND OF LOST SOULS** features a multi-graphic and gruesome situations that have caused various censorship problems since its release. The story is a simple one of an obsessive jungle hunter who uses his knowledge to mercilessly dispose of his wife's lovers, both real and imaginary, eventually even pushing his wife into a lioness onto a lake of crocodiles. Naturally, the *concrete* consequence in the finale where he is crushed to death by a huge snake, an enactment of a realistic footage.

Past paced, beautifully photographed and well cast, Lionel Atwill is excellent as the hunter Eric Gorman, with his creepy staring eyes and relishing every rascally tale. The only drawback is Charlie Ruggles, top billed as the zoo's public relations man Peter Vans, whose humour is misplaced, but not so intrusive as to detract from the rest of the film. The most lasting image, however, is that of the first victim, who in the opening jungle scene has his mouth sewn up by Atwill. Later when his wife asks if her would-be lover had left her a message, Atwill replies "He didn't say anything." Nice one.

MICHAEL SLATTER

NIGHT CREATURE

aka OUT OF THE DARKDEVIL CAT

USA 1977

DIRECTED BY LEE MAIDEN
STARRING DONALD PLEASANCE, NANCY KWAN, ROSS HAGEN, LESLEY EINE, PRANIT YALING-SRI, JENNIFER RHODES, RACHEN KANCHANAMAT

Not strictly a horror film, as both video boxes (Intervention and MPV) and titles go out of their way to suggest, but a jungle suspense thriller about a hunter who brings a killer black panther to his island for a bit of sport. Unfortunately his lady son up unexpectedly and he goes crazy when the beast kills one of his daughters. Nicely shot in Thailand, this is quite weird stuff, it drags and drags. Pleasance is hopelessly miscast as the macho hunter and Ross Hagen (as Rossi) is also the film's producer - always a bad sign. Whenever the panther stalks into view, the film inexplicably changes to slow motion, though there are a couple of good attack scenes.

MICHAEL SLATTER

OCETAMAN

USA 1971

DIRECTED BY HARRY ESSEX
STARRING KERWIN MATTHEWS, PIER ANGELO, JEFF MORROW, DAVID ESSEX, JEROME GUARDINO

Fans of truly ridiculous monster movies should already be familiar with this trash gem from the

early 70s. A bizarre variant on THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON, all the more unusual for the fact it was written and directed by Essex, the screen-writer of LAGOON. OCTAMAN as the title implies has a deformed half-man, half-octopus abomination as its focal point, the result of slick biological practices down Mexico way! While the 'action' encapsulated in OCTAMAN may never rise above a crawl, this film is essential viewing for true deviants, and general students of mind-boggling tack, for a plethora of reasons. There's some delightfully out of place stock footage of African wildlife, despite the film being set in South America: there are particularly wooden ecological musings around a camp-fire, a dose of incredibly uneventful cave mulling, an inspired cast of trash stalwarts, most tempted out of retirement, including Jeff Morrow veteran of 50's epics THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US and THE GIANT CLAW (another film with a wretchedly inept monster) and most interesting Per Angeli notorious ex-flame of James Dean, who actually died of a drug overdose during the film's production! However the real reason to view OCTAMAN is naturally the staggering title beast: it is bordering on inconceivable that this most rubber of rubber monsters was created by the same Rick Baker who would later pick up an Oscar for his state-of-the-art work on AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. This unbelievable creation keeps its tentacles around with wild abandon, stretches like a boiling tentacle and unless my eyes were playing tricks on me, has a visible knicker line! Sluggish, embarrassing, bizarre, wild! If you're the sort of person who derives pleasure from such irredeemable garbage, then this should be on your priority list.

JOHN HILL



ROCK N' ROLL WRESTLING WOMEN Vs THE AZTEC APE

aka. LAS LUCHADORAS CONTRA EL MEDICO RESINO/DOCTOR OF DOOM

MEXICO 1962

DIRECTED BY RENE CARDONA SNR

STARRING LORINA VASQUEZ, ELIZABETH CAMPBELL, ARMANDO SILVESTRE

This was originally released in it's English form

as DOCTOR OF DOOM the Santa Monica based company, Rhino Video got hold of a copy, gave it another title change and over dubbed part of the soundtrack with a rousing rock n' roll score! They describe it as a "designer drama", well I don't know too much about that but for one thing, it's superb fun!

This was the first film in a whole series of Mexican wrestling movies which were made in abundance during the Sixties and early Seventies. They launched a star - Santo who along with his buddy, Blue Demon, fought every monster imaginable. However I digress, Santo isn't even in this film. What the film does contain is a mad scientist who conducts experiments with human and animal brains. He transplants the brain of an ape into a human body and creates a super-strong ape-man called Gomar (his name was also used in Cardona's infamous gore-fest, NIGHT OF THE BLOODY APES (1969)). Gomar is instructed, under hypnosis, to capture an intelligent female scientist so that the "Mad Doctor" can use her brain for his next creation. The lady scientist is captured by Gomar and her brain is used in the Mad Doctor's latest experiment, a super human, female wrestler named Vendetta.

The Mad Doctor, under a guise (a Santo mask!) makes a challenge to the dead girl's sister (another female wrestler, named Gloria Venus) and her companion The Golden Robe. He challenges them to a bout with Vendetta. While the fight takes place, one of the two bumbling cops (horrendous as the two lady wrestlers) recognises one of the Mad Doctor's henchmen in the audience. Robs gives chase and squeezes Vendetta's secret out of the bad guy. The cops are alerted of the Mad Doctor's plans and give chase, finally cornering the Madman and Gomar at an electricity station before delivering them.

This is an entertaining (if a bit) from start to finish it's marvellous, with dead pan acting, choice dubbing and chemistry make up. Action scenes take centre stage, and are photographed with the minimum of quality. The idea of using a rock n' roll soundtrack is excellent, but the choice of songs could have been better. I still think that the Shoop-Shoop song would have been better replaced with "The Clutches" by The Cramps. Now that's a REAL wrestling song—Grrraaagh!!

NIGE BARTLETT

STRANGE BEHAVIOUR

aka. DEAD KIDS

USA 1961

DIRECTED BY MICHAEL LAUCHLIN

STARRING DAN SHOR, MICHAEL MURPHY, LOUISE FLETCHER, ARTHUR DIGNAM, FIONA LEWIS, DEY YOUNG, SCOTT BRADY, CHARLES LANE

Odd things are happening in a small college town where a government research centre is experimenting with drugs to determine the effects of mental conditioning, causing local students to run murderously amok and generally act rather strangely.

This was the directorial debut of Michael Laughlin, who went on to make STRANGE INVADERS, and is not without some atmosphere and originality. The cast is also fairly strong for a relatively low budget production with the likes of Oscar winner Louise Fletcher and Fiona Lewis (the heroine in

DR. PHIBBS RISES AGAIN). Musically, there is an eclectic collection of styles, ranging from new wave to Tangierian Dream, which actually works quite well delivering several effective moments.

Based on the novel 'School Days' and filmed in New Zealand, STRANGE BEHAVIOUR possesses a quietly evocative mood of sinister intrigue. Laughlin's direction often amazes and although the resolution to all the bizarre goings on is conventional in many ways, it does not detract from the strong build-up. The theme of conditioning is an interesting one and here it is explored with at least some intelligence. Well worth a retrospective look.

MARK HOCKLEY

THE TERROR OF TINY TOWN

USA 1938

DIRECTED BY SAM NEWFIELD

STARRING BILLY CURTIS, YVONNE MORAY, LITTLE BILLY BILL PLATT, JONN BAMBLBY, JOSEPH HERBERT, CHARLES BECKER, NITA KREBS, GEORGE MINISTERS and THE RANCHMEN, COWBOYS AND CITIZENS OF TINY TOWN (subtitled A BOLLINGIN' BOOBIN', TOOTIN', SHOOTIN' DRAMA OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS)

You would think an all midgel cast movie would be able to sustain some interest wouldn't you? Unfortunately, you'd be wrong: this is tedious in the extreme. Not that it is really the midgel's fault, the script here is just awful, the songs, in the style of the Minchins, are horrible and the direction, by ultra-prolific Newfield (MAD MONSTER/LOST CONTINENT), is amateur. It's your basic herzog/haygr western story - the villain sets up a feud between two families so he can rustle their cattle without getting the blame. The hero and the girl are on opposing sides, but (you're) in love. How can the hero bring everybody together and save Tiny Town from the Terror of the villain (gasp)?

The novelty of watching midgels soon wears off, their voices begin to grate and though they try their best, the acting side of things is woefully inadequate. They constantly poke fun at themselves, or rather the producer pokes fun at them - an unforgettably patronising prelude, all the sets are from 'normal' sound productions, the town's doctor is called Dr. Hy Lowman, a cook provides midgel comic relief that is not very comic. No doubt they had great fun doing it, but the result is dull. Producer Ted Ruell planned a series of midgel movies with TARZAN producer Sol Lesser which never materialised, though he did make an all-black cast western, again with Newfield, called HARLEM ON THE PRAIRIE (what a guy! By the way, does anyone know why there was a perquian in the barbershop?)

MICHAEL SLATTERY

COMING SOON!

DISCUSSING SPACE WORMS EAT EVERYONE, DECADE, GHOST OF RASHMON HALL, INCREDIBLE TWO HEADID TRANSPLANT, LADY FRANKENSTEIN, PHOENIX THE WARRIOR, SHOCK WAVES, SHRIEK OF THE MUTILATED, TELL TALE HEART, MORE TRASH GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT ELSE! BE HERE!



HEN/MENA

THE UFO FILES PART 1

UFO's, unidentified flying objects to give them their complete heading, and their alien inhabitants have been a mainstay of fiction in print and celluloid for the best part of the century. Though certainly the alien invasion storyline was at its peak during the 1950's, when UFO sightings in the United States were at an all-time high (I think a case of life imitating art, rather than the reverse) the fact is that reported cases of unexplained flying phenomena have been a factor of human history for much, much longer. Throughout the course of these columns I will be relating to you 'as it happened' accounts of close encounters. I'm not going to be feeding you that Sunday 'hooray' style 'Angels about Eve' type stuff, but will tell you of real reported incidents, simply give you the facts and let you decide.

There are various starting points to look at close encounters, even going as far back as the bible itself. The Old Testament prophet Elijah, for example, ascended into the sky on a 'chariot of fire' caught in a whirlwind, Jacob's vision from Genesis of angels climbing a ladder into heaven has also been interpreted as an early UFO incident. Other scholars have even credited Moses' parting of the Red Sea to otherworldly intervention: the bible mentions pillars of cloud and fire in this passage, which some enthusiasts have suggested could indeed be the exhaust of a UFO!

One of the most remarkable Biblical UFO incidents is that belonging to the prophet Ezekiel, whose account of a mysterious sighting is related at the start of his Old Testament book. His encounter was told as thus: 'As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the form of men, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.' Ezekiel's account continues describing 'The living creatures moved about together, and from their centre came something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro'. Ezekiel's account was interpreted by the prophet as the likeness of the glory of the Lord, though UFO enthusiasts soon convinced that this description was an ancient account covering the earthly arrival of an alien spacecraft. The controversial Swiss author Erich von Daniken latched onto this concept and put his ideas into his new legendary book **CHARIOTS OF THE GODS** published in 1968. One per-

son who found von Daniken's ideas preposterous and set about rubbishing them

was NASA engineer Josef F. Blumrich, who had been involved with the building of the Saturn V rocket, so obviously he knew his stuff on spacecraft design! Taking his cue from von Daniken's detailed perversion of Ezekiel's account, he set about studying the facts convinced that 'Ezekiel's wheel' as it had now been termed would fall apart under a rocket engineer's rigorous examination. To Blumrich's utter incredulity, he found the description could actually be adapted into a fully functioning practical design for a landing module launched from a mothership which could be accounted for as the prophet's 'glowing wheel of heaven'. Blumrich continued to work on the vision infatigably suggesting the 'four lanterns' could have been four sets of landing gear, each with a wheel for manoeuvring over the ground. Indeed, the creature's 'wings' might have been helicopter blades used for the final positioning of the craft prior to touchdown, while a rocket engine in the ship's conical body would supply the main propulsion! Blumrich provided a detailed sketch of the craft, which I have seen, and without getting too sensationalist, it is possible to see the transition from ancient prophecy to a viable spacecraft. Obviously, not everybody accepts these explanations, indeed Harvard University astronomer, Donald H. Menzel offered up an equally tangible explanation of the whole biblical event by suggesting what Ezekiel actually saw was a rare and complex meteorological phenomenon known as a perihelion, which is apparently the result of sunlight passing through ice crystals. The result of this natural phenomenon is to give the impression of rings and spoke-like beams of light emanating forthwith, which could indeed with a little imagination give the impression of a huge, shimmering object moving within the sun!

Therein lies a problem which is common throughout the entire UFO history, for everyone will have a different opinion. Those who, like myself, want to believe we are not alone in the vastness of the universe, would love the revealing evidence of life from beyond this cone, whereas other, less imaginative individuals, with less flights of fantasy ideology will always offer up an equally convincing scientific conclusion. There are two sides to every story, and although I know which side of the fence I sit on, it is my intention in this column to not take sides, or influence your way of thinking.

In the first of a regular new column 'otherworldly being' STEVE CHAMBERS browses through his notebook of unexplained phenomena, and relates in a non-sensationalist manner the facts behind strange occurrences, covering everything from legendary creatures to allegedly true-life UFO encounters. read on with an open mind.....

The bible was by no means the only reference source for past UFO sightings, the ancient civilisations all had their accounts of out of this world visitations, ranging from the Ancient Egyptians, through the Chinese dynasties and the South American civilisations such as the Aztecs. Indeed Alexander the Great, for instance, reported that his army was harassed by a pair of flying objects in 329 B.C., which leads me into another interesting aspect of UFO-ology, as the amount of sightings during times of war, and especially in and around military installations, is particularly prominent, though more of this in later editions. For now back to the Aztecs, and once again the theories of von Daniken who was convinced life on Earth was under the careful guidance of otherworldly life-forms. In his book **CHARIOTS OF THE GODS** he cited that extraterrestrial astronauts landed at Nazca in the Andes, where massive lines are etched in the Earth's surface that can only be viewed from the air - so why are they there? Indeed the imposing lines dotted throughout the Andes including the monstrous Candelabra a huge 595 foot carving seem to serve little earthly good, but could they possibly be runways for ancient space visitors? Scientists eager to suppress the best-selling power of von Daniken's book (and its follow-up **GODS FROM OUTER SPACE**, which together sold in excess of 34 million copies!) countered his theories by suggesting that if visitors could find their way to earth through millions of miles of empty un-navigated space, why then do they need giant navigational signs to land once they arrived? Added to this it is pointed out Nazca's soft, sandy soil is totally unsuitable for the landing of heavy aircraft! As I said two sides to every argument.

And so the great UFO debate went on through the ages, and throughout the course of this column I will endeavour to bring you some of the more startling cases, once again giving you both sides of the argument, the decision is yours, but believe me there are a lot of cases where a logical explanation can be rendered. Next time however, a change of direction as we distract our attention from outer space and look at the great unexplored regions of our own world, to discover the truth behind unaccounted-for legendary creatures. See you then.

STEVE CHAMBERS

BRAINDEAD

PETER JACKSON QUESTIONED

By John Hill



After years of toying around with the Super 8 medium, Peter Jackson decided to take the step up to feature film production with the home-financed feature **BAD TASTE**. Perhaps never really expecting his film to be noticed beyond his native New Zealand, **BAD TASTE** became an international cult favourite. His follow-up feature, was the equally off-the-wall **MEET THE FEEBLES**, a bizarre all puppet sleaze epic which won equal amounts of praise from stunned critics and public alike. Now with his pet project **BRAIN DEAD** finally coming to fruition, and ready to be unleashed on an unsuspecting public, **MONSTROID** took the opportunity to question this Antipodean auteur on his deranged celluloid output.

"Peter, first of all for our readers who I'm sure are eagerly awaiting **BRAIN DEAD**, tell us a bit about the movie?"

BRAIN DEAD is a zombie-splatter film, much in the manner of **THE EVIL DEAD**, **REANIMATOR** or **DAWN OF THE DEAD**. I haven't tried to top all zombie movies, it's simply my zombie film, made because I love the films I've just mentioned. It does have a lot of outlandish moments, but people can check these out for themselves!

"**BRAIN DEAD** is being touted by certain sources as the ultimate zombie film, is this a fair description, if not how do you perceive it?"

"Again I haven't really set out to make the 'ultimate zombie film'. That would be the height of arrogance. I've simply tried to make a film that I would love to see, if it was somebody else's movie. It's been a few years now since the last decent zombie film, so I thought I'd have a crack at

one myself. I have tried to give it a different and original feel, compared to the other films, as well as a story and characters that perhaps have more depth than is usual for this type of

together, and what made you decide to take the step into film production?"

"**BAD TASTE** took four years to shoot, mostly on Sundays though. It was my first feature film after about 12 years of Super 8 film making. **BAD TASTE** was really nothing more than an expensive home movie."

"With regards censorship, which must pose a problem, do you take this into consideration at all or simply forget about it and hope for the best? Also, considering **BAD TASTE** was passed uncensored by the BBFC, who are notoriously schizo-happy, do you find portraying violence as more slapstick help?"

"When I finish the film I get a video of it for my collection, so censorship doesn't really worry me. It's much more a problem for distributors in the different countries that buy the film. Some countries are tough, some are not. **BRAIN DEAD** is a very funny film and that seems to be taking the edge off the censorship problem. I could imagine the UK censor should see the funny side as they did with **BAD TASTE**."

"Let's hope so!"

BRAIN DEAD is not violent. It is very gory, but does not have a mean spirited atmosphere and it is that which upsets censors more than anything."

"Certain moments in your movies scrape the barrel of poor taste. In thinking of **MEET THE FEEBLES** toilet scene for one, is there anything you would consider too obscene for celluloid?"

"A lot of what happened in **MEET THE FEEBLES** would be too obscene if it happened with humans instead of puppets. If somebody gets severely upset with a large, talking rubber fly eating poo with a silver spoon, then they clearly have problems!"

"Did you ever consider the marketing potential for **FEEBLES** puppets?"

"Yes, Richard Taylor (**FEEBLES** & **BRAIN DEAD** SFX) and myself are intending to release a series of limited edition resin kits of many of the **BAD TASTE**, **FEEBLES** and **BRAIN DEAD** characters starting early next year. He and I will actually be sculpting them ourselves."



film, but then all directors say that!"

"I suppose so... On that note, bearing in mind your home movie roots and the fact you regularly appear in your films (in the case of **BAD TASTE** giving yourself all the best scenes) do you still see yourself as a fan as much as a film-maker?"

"I'm a fan who's been lucky enough to make movies himself. I'm not a wild horror fan however (like a lot of horror fans, I can't stand slasher or bad horror movies). One trick with anything I do is that (not that I'm making them for myself, nobody else."

"You appear in **BRAIN DEAD** don't you?"

"Yes, I play a small role as an undertaker's assistant."

"Going back to **BAD TASTE**, just how long did that film take to bring





PETER JACKSON (LEFT) AND TIM LEAGUE (RIGHT) DIRECTING *BRAIN DEAD*

little, what a great idea about now that B&B is back in the news. I'd like to see the New Zealand film industry.

"You said earlier you intend doing other types of films to straight horror movies. How about a war movie influenced by *FEELIES*?"

I do want to do a war movie actually, but about New Zealanders in the 1915 Gallipoli campaign.

"In that case, in the entire history of cinema, which film would you most have liked your name on?"

KING KONG (1933) and THE GENERAL (1927). I'd be happy to be associated with *GOODFELLAS* too.

"Have you seen the British film *REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID*, which was recently released here, your work certainly seems to have been an influence on this?"

No, but I met the people who made it at Cannes and they seemed to be nice guys.

"And finally, a question I've seen a lot of people want answered, just what the hell was in that bowl of alien puke in *BAD TASTE*?"

Ying-yang, trout, leek, bean, green vegetables and much!

And there you have it. Peter Jackson is a film director somewhat misinterpreted as merely a comic in the splatter genre. Although it's obvious he's not the best at directing in terms of technique, his originality is compensated by his enthusiasm and openness. Helpfulness in making this interview possible. Fine, may his name be in the credits.

"Obviously being an all puppet cast, *MEET THE FEEBLES* would be a relatively cheap film in finance, are there any plans for a sequel, and what incidentally is your position on sequels?"

I've got a good idea for a *FEELIES* sequel, but it is not planned for the near future. I'll do sequels if I feel like doing them.

"What about a *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* & which you were once linked with?"

I can't say too much about it. It was written by Danny Malhotra (*MEET THE FEEBLES*) and myself. I think it would have been the EMI thing that the tins have been hanging out for. I'm not a great Freddy fan myself, but I would have had a hell of a good time with him. I'm still hoping it will get made, but I'm not hanging around waiting for New Line to make up their mind.

"So you wouldn't mind working for a major studio?"

"I'll make films. I'm interested in it, I don't care where they are made."

I do want a lot of control. The fact kinda means I should probably be wary at Hollywood.

"Supposing you did join the mainstream, and you got your complete artistic control like you said, plus an unlimited budget, what do you think you'd come up with, and back in the real world, what projects are actually in the pipeline?"

I want to do a big budget fantasy film, one day. My next film however, is called *HEAVENLY CREATURES*. It's a drama about the relationship between two million year old girls. It's based on a true story, set in New Zealand in 1994. I feel like doing something totally different.

"What sort of reaction do your films get over there in New Zealand?"

The critics don't like them. And about my films, I just sit back and think about

BRAIN DEAD

PREVIEW!

by Richard Griffiths

Mother love, what a lot it has to answer for. On a trip to the zoo, Lionel's domineering mother gets bitten by a strange rat-monkey. Back home she falls terribly ill. Falls a nurse, and then dies horribly. But as we all know in zombie films, death is only the beginning. Out of the grave she comes, killing a few more people including the local karate star before Lionel catches up and locks the whole lot of them in the cellar. All would be fine, but fat-slob Uncle Les has designs on the house, and thinks it is about time to hold a party for his friends.

What follows is a high-powered, hysterical horror-comedy that follows Lionel's desperate attempts to cover for his mother's killing, save his faltering relationship with girlfriend Paquita, and come the end, slaughter the hordes of mauling zombies using a rotary lawnmower.

While *BRAIN DEAD* does not claim to be original, Jackson is doing herself a disservice by ranking it alongside *REANIMATOR* and *EVE DEAD*. They are epitomes of restraint compared to this. The second half of the film is an unrelenting barrage of outrageous gore, the likes of which have never been seen before on the silver screen, as the zombies take over a house full of partygoers. The effects are top-notch and gags gleefully explicit.

Whether this film will get a certificate is a difficult question. Either it will be released totally uncensored or not at all because if one cut was made, the whole of the last half an hour would have to disappear. That said, *BRAIN DEAD* is not in the least bit vicious and the whole thing is so good-humoured it is difficult to see what valid objections the BBFC would come up with. Jackson loves one point for his very occasional awkward camera angles and the dodgy stop-motion rat-monkey but that aside he has wiped the floor of the horror-comedy market. Rams and Gordon may as well pack up and go home.

BRAIN DEAD

NEW ZEALAND 1992

WINCHUT FILMS

DIRECTED BY PETER JACKSON
PRODUCER JIM BOOTH
SCREENPLAY STEPHEN SINCLAIR, FRANCES WALSH, PETER JACKSON
EDITOR JAMIE SELKIRK
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MURRAY MILNE
PRODUCTION DESIGN KEVIN LEAHARD-JONES
MUSIC PETER CASSETT
CREATURE & GORE EFFECTS RICHARD TAYLOR
PROSTHETICS DESIGN BOB MCCARRON
CAST:

TIMOTHY BALME (LIONEL)
DIANA PENALVER (PAQUITA)
ELIZABETH MOODY (MUM)
IAN WATSON (UNCLE LES)
JED BROPHY (VOICE)
BRENDA KENDALL (NURSE MCTAVISH)
STUART CEVENE (FATHER MCGRIFFOER)

UNRATED VERSION 101 MINUTES.



EVIL DUNGEON



HOME GROWN HORRORS A Beginners Guide to Making Monsters

by John Fidler

Once in a while, every normal well balanced person feels the urge to create a terrifying creature. Some blood-crazed zombie, a genetically engineered brain-sucker, a tomb-robbing demon, or some bad assed extra-terrestrial with a passion for extreme violence. I know I do! This series of articles is aimed at such people.

With the help of "Shred-Head" here and various other creations, we will cover design and sculpture and go on to the basic construction of rod puppets and cable operated creatures developed from these sculptures. Along the way we'll also cover basic mould making and duplicating the finished artifact in durable and flexible materials, so they can be used in your movies or just as "decoration". We'll also cover making eyeballs and teeth. Naturally I want to hear your creature making tips too. Get writing! Lets get the demons out of your mind and into reality. I hope you will find it interesting and we all learn something along the way.

Please lets make an important point from the start. This is aimed at the hobbyist, it is NOT professional instruction, and there is NO substitute for professional instruction. Certain materials and processes used by the Monster Maker - like those of any other creative modeller can be dangerous if incorrectly used. While I will refer to the materials and techniques used, it is up to the individual to ensure safe working practices - all manufacturers will supply health and safety details - take heed of them!!

Right, that's the lecture over with, lets get down to some serious demonic design.

Design can really make or break a creature creation. The most magnificently crafted and constructed piece of work is not going to be any good if the design is poor.

First you have to come up with a design (pretty obvious really). You may already have some idea in mind, but even so look at it carefully - break it down into the "fear-factors".

What are the fear factors, and what should you look for in a design?

I would suggest you examine what you find frightening. Skeletons, spiders, (argh!) reptiles? Examine what you find horrific in these things (I find the claw shaped posture in spiders legs the most disturbing aspect of these generally harmless but - to me - horrible creatures). Look at the results on screen, of the top monster makers. What is it in their designs that is so convincing?

I find it very useful to look at how good cartoonists bring



not a character in just a few lines. Bullies tend to have pugnacious, strong jawlines. They have deep set eyes and tilted angry brows/lines - the very essence of meanness. Similarly, evil characters have tilted brows and evil smiles, often with a thin "pointed" face. Etching the skull or skeleton is a popular fear factor as living corpses (even if portrayed "high-tech" like the Terminator endoskeleton) always provoke a strong reaction.

By the way, unintentional facial expression is something to watch out for. Don't accidentally make your creature look dumb if it's supposed to look mean. For figures, again study the "short-hand" of cartoonists. The posture and position of the limbs in a threatening pose or perhaps the way the head seems lower than the shoulders for example, and exploit it in your design.

The distortion of the human figure is a good fear-factor, either as the result of extreme violence or by perverting the human form into a recognisable but disturbingly different shape. There are also one or two ground rules especially where eyes are concerned. It never pays to make eyes too big, they look "wrong". There is no reason why an Arcturian Bladelimb should not (They probably do!) have eyes the size of footballs, but because it doesn't happen in our nature it registers as "wrong" in a creature (look at the size of a whale's eye in comparison to it's size - it looks tiny).

Similarly as you are probably aware, the pupil of the eye enlarges if looking at someone viewed with affection. The opposite is equally true, so exploit it - make little, navy pupils!

And of course, it's important to study, or at least keep a book handy on anatomy (human and animal). Even if it is

gross distortions its important to keep basic anatomy sound. We're so used to seeing it every day that a "read" wrong if the most crantly twisted limb doesn't at least conform to the basics.

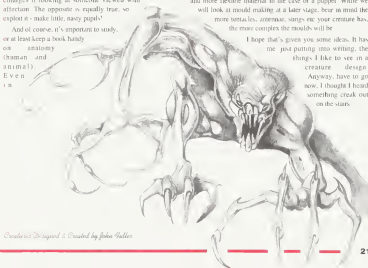
Also to be truly creative, you should strive to be original, to develop your own style. There's no harm in making your own version of your favourite movie monsters. It's great to have your own around the house and it's great practice, trying to match or improve the original - but why not invent your own!!

Of course like all good designs form should fit function. Again look at the TERMINATOR-series. Not only is the T1000 a good design/idea it looks like it should! A sleek, new, highly efficient killing machine. It looks shiny, straight out of the factory. Subliminal perhaps, but you can bet it's intentional.

It's useful to spend some time doodling and scribbling whenever you get a spare moment, in fact I find it very difficult to sit down and be creative to order. Creativity is a very fleeting thing, so go with it when the inspiration is there. For designing a three dimensional subject I would not get too detailed on paper. By all means sketch out the pose, or basic idea. But I find clay is better for working out the "muddy-graty". It's very easy to draw something you can't sculpt - and not through lack of ability - not all things translate from paper to clay.

One important point though- generally, modelling materials are not suitable as a final construction medium. They have to be soft and malleable so you can work them easily, therefore, even when sat on a shelf, the final constructs are easily damaged. This means you need to make a mould, so your creation can be duplicated in a stronger material, or a stronger and more flexible material in the case of a puppet. While we will look at mould making at a later stage, bear in mind the more tentacles, antennae, wings etc your creature has, the more complex the moulds will be.

I hope that's given you some ideas. It has me just putting into writing, the things I like to see in a creature design. Anyway, have to go now, I thought I heard something creak out on the stairs.



Centipede Design & Created by John Badler



(ESTABLISHED 1878)

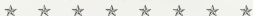
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ALIEN 3

USA/UK 1992. (20th Century Fox)

STARRING SIGOURNEY WEAVER; CHARLES S. DUTTON; CHARLES DANCE; PAUL MCGANN; BRIAN GLOVER; LANCE HENRIKSEN.

DIRECTED BY DAVID FINCHER.

ALIEN 3 is finally with us after a seemingly never-ending 'production hell', and has become one of the most hyped films of the year, although admittedly for all the wrong reasons. Because of the movie's notorious production it would be unfair to view the final product objectively without detailing what circumstances were endured to bring about the completed picture. Granted, an endless churn-through of a film's production notes is hardly the most inspired journalistic content, but I think that for this one film at least, that it is valid. Additionally, against my normal reviewing policy of not divulging too many plot details (an annoying tactic employed by far too many critics who seem to be under the misapprehension that relating a film's storyline word for word followed by a minimalist personal opinion makes for interesting reading), I will divulge the course of the following be outlining certain plot threads, which bear comment, so if you don't want your viewing experience undermined then please don't read on.

ALIEN 3 is finally unleashed by a less than enthusiastic Fox is a dark, menacing, downbeat and thoroughly heartless piece of celluloid terror, and surprisingly has emerged in my opinion at least, to be one of the more interesting genre releases of the year thus far. As outlined on page 25 ALIEN 3 could have finished up as just about anything from a brain-dead re-tread of Cameron's rollercoaster treatment, to an arthouse meander focusing on wooden spacecraft and God only knows what else. Instead we are served up an unapologetic, bleak treatment of the ALIEN myth which bravely decides to ditch all accepted mainstream sensibilities, and dares to subject its audience to an unhappy ending, in actual fact a more believable conclusion to the trilogy: a stark realisation of the probable outcome of a lone woman fighting for survival all these years against the most perfect killing machine in the Galaxy.

When an unsuspected emergency aboard the spacecraft Sulaco (from the close of ALIENS) causes the autopilot mechanism to jettison its slumbering crew in an escape capsule, said crew (Ripley, Hicks, Newt and Bishop) crashland on the prison planetoid Fiorina 161, a forbidding world inhabited only by a penal colony of rapists and murderers who have turned to religion to save their pitiful souls. The outcome of this turbulent plummet to terra-firma is the demise of all onboard except for Ripley (Weaver) who manages to pull through to fight another day. Regaining consciousness, Ripley reluctantly accepts her fate, and begins to expect the worse concerning the cause of the mothership's self-destruction. Finding herself to be the sole female on the hellish planet, she strikes up a more than platonic relationship with the facility's medical officer Clemens (Dance), all along under the realisation that she may just have brought along for the ride the

parasitic leecher for whom she has been the quarry for all these years. From here on ALIEN 3 treads familiar ground for a while, as the obligatory title creature comes out its customary metamorphosis, this time bursting out of a hound in the THING fashion. It is when Ripley's worst nightmares are affirmed that the movie really gets underway as she realises she is trapped on this world with no conceivable means of escape, and worse: in direct contrast to the second film, has no available weaponry to fight the predator with!

If Ridley Scott's original was a startling horror/SF crossbreed, and Cameron's sequel was STAR WARS for adults, then ALIEN 3 tends to discard its science fiction elements as much as possible, and opts to go for the throat so to speak to offer up the closest undiluted horror interpretation of the series so far. No doubt about it, this is pure horror, all the trappings are present, sweeping cameras prowling shadow-shrouded corridors, and no small amount of large-screen splatter as protagonists meet untimely demises throughout, other being shredded limb from limb by the title critter, or in the case of one unfortunate getting dissected by a huge fan in a terribly messy sequence. To underline the movie's unflinching resolve to disturb, there's also a horrendous autopsy performed on Newt utilising the kind of tools that would cause Jack the Ripper to cringe!

ALIEN 3 is bleak throughout, and offers no apology for being so, cast members are ousted with zero sympathy, the characters portrayed by Dance and Glover are disposed of at an alarmingly early juncture, with minimal regard, and the decision to similarly kill off the survivors of ALIENS is an unbelievably cynical tactic. Certainly in the confines of this story there was no place for them, but to cause a retrogressive misery to James Cameron's gung-ho caper, was I think a mistake, and a cheat to that director's endeavours. If like me you viewed the preceding instalments again, before watching this final chapter, you will no doubt feel distressed that the stirring finale of that epic was to no avail, and that in a few hours in the protagonists' time, they'd all be dead! Sigourney Weaver's portrayal of Ripley is a character that has been etched into our memory for nearly a decade and a half now, and her eventual demise in this outing, was I must admit, frankly, quite touching. Ripley's persona has been of the more endearing icons of science fiction cinema, and to realise she is now gone leaves something of an empty space within the genre. However, the decision to kill off the character was an inevitable one I suppose, portraying the stark realisation of the odds of surviving far so long against such a murderous adversary. Subsequently the fact Weaver wasn't willing to portray the character further may have been the main reason for her opting, but I won't be so cynical to suggest such a thing.

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

ALIEN 3

This time it's hiding in the most terrifying place of all.



Ripley's maternal indestructibility as portrayed here is a dual-edged sword, the fact that the alien won't kill her makes for some interesting role reversals as she gets to hunt down the galactic serial killer, but as a result of this, we feel no danger for her, we know she won't be killed or even harmed slightly, so a fundamental law of horror cinema is disregarded - if your lead protagonist, with whom the audience identifies is in no immediate peril, then the audience feels no fright. Which is a shame, for the other cast members in their uniform baldness are not characterised sufficiently for us to feel sympathy for or allegiance to when they wander into danger. This is doubly disappointing, as I feel the alien in this trip is the most menacing yet, as not only is it fast as hell, no lumbering about for this xenomorph, this baby sprints, but for a change we get to see what the creature does with its prey - no fast edit cutaways, we see this mother ripping its victims apart! Reverting back to the original Giger design, this alien is sleeker and more sinister than Stan Winston's robotic creations from the first sequel. Rendered utilising a combination of puppetry and particularly effective computer animation (a trend instigated by TERMINATOR 2 and already followed by SLEEPWALKERS), this is probably the most effective creature of the series.

Considering what he had to work with, David Fincher has culled together a most impressive directorial debut, ALIEN 3 looks the part, his pop video CV has certainly helped this cinematic rookie bring a third unique visual style to the ALIEN mythos.

Because it carries on with characters from previous instalments, you must look at ALIEN 3 in comparison to its counterparts, and though not nearly as impressive as its brethren, ALIEN 3 is far from the unmitigated disaster I had feared. In fact it is one of my favourite offerings of a far from impressive year of celluloid shocks, call me a miserable old sod (again!) but for a mainstream production to take such a financial risk, especially in the present recession hit climate, and turn out such an unremittingly bleak picture, offering little hope, and no cheerful conclusion, I think Fox should be applauded, although the old cynic I am, I don't think this was ever their intention, personally I think they would have been happy to milk this 'franchise' Weaver willing, into a sequel graveyard. As it is Fincher has come aboard under the most troubled circumstances and killed off the whole thing with an inkling of dignity and not a little bravery. Whether the mainstream audience Fox are targetting will appreciate this tactic, is highly unlikely, but I for one can appreciate what is on offer, and was tempted, considering the film's history, to award the full five rating, but persuaded by my conscience which tells me this final product was merely the best of a bad job as far as all are concerned, I decided otherwise.

In summary ALIEN 3 is a bleak, brutal and numbing film experience, it offers little hope and no comfort, it will not appeal to many and coming after ALIENS it will alienate (sorry!) the majority, but then again, I never was one of the majority.

John Hill



A L I E N S



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ALIEN Trivia

Just for fun, test your knowledge of the ALIEN trilogy with the following questions, which range from criminally easy to disgustingly difficult. The answers appear in SEVERED SEGMENTS.

- 1) What was the name of the spacecraft in ALIEN and which author was the name an homage to?
- 2) John Hurt's Kane character may have been the first to fall fowl of the alien, but which actor was second to go during the series?
- 3) Who wrote the original ALIEN and what feature films did he go on to direct?
- 4) Though an original screenplay, ALIEN's story was remarkably similar to a novella by AE VAN VOGT published in 1939, what was the title of this story?
- 5) One of ALIEN's conceptual designers, Roger Christian went on to helm his own ill-fated science fiction epic, what was it?
- 6) What is Ripley's christian name? What about Michael Biehn's Hicks character?
- 7) ALIENS was the official sequel, but in its native country there was a film called ALIEN 2! What was it known as in the UK and who directed it?
- 8) Before directing ALIENS, James Cameron worked as production designer on an ALIEN rip-off. Name the film and which soon to be horror icon actor started in it?
- 9) Which Channel 4 US sitcom does ALIENS bad guy Paul Reiser star in?
- 10) Which SF blockbuster did ALIEN 3 director David Fincher work on as a 19 year old?

ALIEN 3 - THE ROAD TO RUIN?

ALIEN 3, whether Twentieth Century Fox, Sigourney Weaver or the rest of the cast and crew edit it or not, has had one of the most remarkable and problematic production schedules in recent film-making history. The following is a chronological account of just exactly what this film went through to make it onto the silver screen:

EARLY 1989

The first script submitted by 'Cyberpunk' author William Gibson, is offered up for an intended Easter 1990 U.S. release. I remember receiving a copy of this script when I was still working on WHIFLASH SMILE magazine, and it had no mention of Sigourney Weaver's Ripley character whatsoever, as at the time she had no intention of doing another ALIEN instalment. This script was then revised by Eric Red and screenwriter/director of such genre pieces as THE HITCHER, NEAR DARK, and the recent BODY PARTS. Once again there is no place for Ripley. Again the script is re-written, this time by producers Walter Hill and David Giler, adopting the original Gibson piece. Finally a director is snared in the form of Renny Harlin (PRISON, ELM STREET 4) but he soon departs because of his dissatisfaction with the latest script which he claims is 'nothing more than a re-hash of the previous two movies!'. Harlin leaves to shoot DIE HARD 2 and Fox once again find themselves without a script or director!

LATE 1989

The producers Hill and Giler enlist the services of screenwriter David Twohy (WARLOCK, TIMESCAPE) to start from scratch, and to now centre the storyline around Weaver's Ripley character, who Fox are in desperate negotiations with to get onboard the project. Twohy's script tells the action on a prison planetoid, and is reputedly the strongest script offered up during the entire production, but problems arise when Sigourney Weaver shows interest in getting involved (lured by a reputed 4 million dollars fee, plus a percentage of the gross and an executive producer credit) and insists on story and dialogue input.

JANUARY 1990

Eccentric New Zealand director Vincent Ward fresh from his art-house cult hit THE NAVIGATOR is brought onboard as director, but also insists on re-writing Twohy's now rapidly altering storyline. Along with John Fasano, Ward comes up with a re-write entitled "A Medieval Odyssey" which includes such allegedly off-the-wall elements as a Tudor galleon floating through space!! the action being switched to a monastery colony based on a satellite made from wood!! and just for fun, demanded everyone in the cast to be killed off in the climax!! Unbelievably Fox decide to go with this plot-line and Twohy is never contacted again.

APRIL 1990

Vincent Ward, now at the helm orders drastic crew changes and shows oscar-winning special effects supervisor John Richardson and crea-

ture designer Stan Winston the door. His production continues in London, but Ward is at loggerheads with co-writer Fasano, so brings in scripter Greg Pruss to polish up the screenplay.

JULY 1990

Ward's eccentricity finally reaches the final straw with Fox, who wisely decide to cut him along 'creative differences', but to me at least, by now the damage had already become irreparable. John Fasano returns, to come up with yet another re-write! The production is shut down while further screenplays are commissioned, and directors auditioned.

SEPTEMBER 1990

David Fincher, who many regard as the new Russell Mulcahy for his widely acclaimed pop video work with the likes of Paula Abdul and Madonna is given his chance at feature film directing. Lamy Ferguson (best known for such as HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER and BEVERLY HILLS COP 2) is brought in to polish up the now totally re-writ script. Fox and producers Giler and Hill are unhappy however with the treatment of Ripley's character (bear in mind of course Sigourney Weaver hadn't even signed a contract stating she would even appear in the film yet!) and decide to have a go at writing the thing themselves!

DECEMBER 1990

After seemingly settling the whole fiasco themselves, Hill and Giler's script is rejected as well, as Fox were less than enthusiastic about it. Fincher brings in his own writer Rex Pickett (writer/director of FROM HOLLYWOOD TO DEADWOOD) to dissect the storyline to his liking. Finally after nearly two years of production hell, Sigourney Weaver signs on the dotted line to reprise the role of Ripley, but under the proviso [are you ready for this?] that Pickett is ditched in favour of Hill and Giler! Shooting is at last scheduled to begin at Pinewood on January 14th, 1991.

EARLY 1991

Shooting gets under way at long, long last for an intended Christmas release date. During production no less than ten!! revisions are made to the Hill/Giler screenplay. Problems also arise as shooting took place during the Gulf War, and allegedly the producer in charge highlights it back to the safety of the States, leaving the crew without the vital production support required, and leaving novice director Fincher in charge to shoot footage at which. Reportedly over thirty takes of a single shot were common practice, and not surprisingly the budget escalates from an intended 37 million dollars to 50 million and beyond!

AUGUST 1991

Fincher offers up a rough-out of the film, which Fox are so unhappy with that they order a month of re-shoots, to give the film a more upbeat ending, the current one also appealing strikingly similar to that of TERMINATOR 2. Problems arise however when Miss Weaver

refuses to film said re-shoots due to her unwillingness to shave off all her hair once more in line with her appearance in the remainder of the film.

1992

Unable to complete their wistful re-shoots sufficiently, Twentieth Century Fox are left with a downbeat, bleak final product, and decide to pull ALIEN 3 from its planned U.S. Christmas release. Fox uncertain about their finished production prove quite reluctant to showcase their movie in the genre press: FANGORIA magazine for instance is denied initial 'creature' shots until after the film hits the screens, due to the fact that Fox want to keep the creature's identity hidden - despite the fact everybody has already seen the beast in the previous two instalments!! The first sneak preview trailers start to find their way onto cinema screens, and look surprisingly encouraging with some startling monster points of view shots, and a totally bold cast!

After several missed release dates in both the U.S. and UK to avoid other features such as BATMAN RETURNS and LETHAL WEAPON 3, ALIEN 3 finally gets its U.S. release on May 22nd 1992, where it fails to enter the Variety top ten charts at the expected number one position, despite a respectable 23 million dollar opening weekend gross. Within a month the film has dropped out of the top ten altogether! Once again ALIEN 3 gets re-shuffled for its UK release to presumably avoid LETHAL WEAPON 3's debut and finally sees the light of day in UK cinemas on August 21st.



FRESH RIGHTS

MONSTROID RATINGS

0 Absolute Pro

✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ Watchable

✖ ✖ Very Poor

✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ Good

✖ ✖ ✖ Below Average

✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ ✖ Instant Classic

BATMAN RETURNS

✖ ✖ ✖

USA 1992 WARNER BROTHERS

DIRECTED BY TIM BURTON

STARRING MICHAEL KEATON, DANNY DEVITO, MICHELLE YEOFEE, CHRISTOPHER WALKER

BATMAN RETURNS along with **ALIEN III** was one of the main genre talking points this Summer and it is this film that came to us with the greater initial promise, after all the rumours concerning **ALIEN III**'s troubled production. Therefore I assume most of you out there have seen this by now (and if not then why are you reading this magazine?). Supposedly more of a true Tim Burton vision of the Dark Knight comic capers than the original **BATMAN**, that fact despite Burton's visionary genius and superlative skill at creating wild fantasy imagery is ironically what, in my opinion, less this sequel down, and leaves the original film as the truest vision yet of cinematic super-heroism.

Where **BATMAN** was dark, not only visually but also psychologically - the humour was blacker than the powerful costume's laundry, here **BATMAN RETURNS** follows in a similar, though less menacing vein. The characters appear less dangerous, the psychotic trappings of the first film have been watered down. Even though the film is visually bleak there are no daylight scenes at all! With everything awash in industrial grey and drenched in a coat of mid-Winter snow, the attitude is less ominous, and though it doesn't really reach the tone of being apocalyptic, the whole scenario is far less disturbing, and in at least a couple of scenes the whole thing threatens to take on the farcical features of **EDWARD SCISSORHANDS**! So, call me a miserable old sod if you like, but it was the incredibly dark, brooding quality of the original that made it so different from any other mainstream Hollywood fantasy, you really felt that the characters were disturbed, I mean let's face it, for someone to run around in a bat costume, he's got to be a tad off his trolley!

For the record, the story starts with an insight into the creation of the Penguin, born hideously deformed and unconsciously dumped into the Gotham City sewers by the mutant offspring of distant parents. Thirty three years later, and rumours abound of a half-man, half-bird creature alive under the city streets, whilst in a parallel storyline corrupt mayor and wheeler Max Schreck (Christopher Walken in a role with at least as much screen time as the three leads, but mysteriously with no billing on the advertising) is creating his own monster when he pushes his noisy secretary Selina Kyle (Pfeiffer looking almost as dowdy as she did in **FRANKIE & JOHNNY**) to her supposed doom (she has his high-rise office block). When the penguin emerges from the sewers and calculates a plan with Schreck to assume the role of Gotham mayor (his intentions are more lecherous than political) a new villain appears in the techno form of Catwoman, and it's now that

Batman emerges into the fold, in a story that tries to mould the three lead characters together in an amalgam of corruption, broken alliances, and in the case of Batman and Catwoman's alter-egos a sexual coupling.

In truth the plot is quite weak, and Batman has probably chewed off more than he can handle by trying to focus on three lead characters all at once, it must be said that he leaves something to be desired as a storyteller. However, when viewing **BATMAN RETURNS** as a fantasy film, and viewing it from a visual perspective, it is here where the film and Burton as a sculptor of cinematic mayhem come into their own. Tim Burton is without equal when it comes to creating unique, beautiful and truly warped fantasy images. Whether it be the astounding sweeping view of the snow-blanketed Gotham Zoo, with its animal artificial animal sculptures near the opening of the movie through to the truly bizarre funeral cortège of real penguins towards the close, the imagery of **BATMAN RETURNS** is breath-taking, and mention must also go in the stunning production design of Bo Welch. The film's look has obviously been heavily influenced by early German expressionist cinema, as is tipped off by the fact that Walken's character is named after the original **NOSFERATU**.

Despite quite a bit of interplay between the three leads, we don't really get to know the protagonists like the first film, certainly we get no further insight into the psychological problems of the title character. Once again Tim Burton gives more time to his villains, however unlike the larger than life portrayal of the Joker in the original, DeVito's Penguin just doesn't evade me, rather than being deeply despised like Joker lack he just seems mildly confused! Certainly he looks the part, thanks to another Oscar worthy Stan Winston make-up, but like I said he just doesn't impose as a criminal genius. As for Catwoman portrayed by Pfeiffer in what can only be described as a feminist wet dream come to life costume, her character is passively sympathetic, and comparisons are riched between her and Batgirl/Bruce Wayne's mind and situation. This was potentially the most interesting plot route, but like so much of the storyline is under developed. Still despite its plot failings, **BATMAN RETURNS** is a film I would urge you to see for yourself, each viewer will take something different from it, certainly I was in a minority in my admiration of the first for its smaller undertones. There may not be a better fantasy film all year, but this was one release that I really expected to top its predecessor as good as it was, and I can't in all honesty say it has, although visually it is a masterpiece, and on a technical level too it is incredible, the new gimmicks with the Batmobile alone, should be seen to be believed. It is ironic then, that like its title character, **BATMAN RETURNS** is a film of dual personalities, one half brilliant, one half disappointing, but in summary this is a remarkable film from a remarkable film-maker, but it could have and should have been more remarkable still.

JOHN HILL



CRITTERS 3

✖

USA 1992 RVI

DIRECTED BY KRISTINE PETERSON

STARRING AMIEE BROOKS, JOHN CALVIN, KATHERINE CORTIZ, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, GEOFFREY BLACK, DON OPPER

I must confess a soft spot for the first **CRITTERS** and even found moments of understanding entertainment in the generally uninspired sequel, however my generosity towards the series screams to a halt with this latest. Cliche city throughout, with only the fact that it was directed by a woman, and the two most resourceful characters in the film also being female giving this thing any inkling of originality, otherwise this is unbelievably bland and thoroughly derivative. Basically this is **CRITTERS** go to town as they infect a seedy apartment block, the result coming across like a domestic **DIE HARD** with added tubbels, or **BATTERIES NOT INCLUDED** with beans not included either!

This really is a pitiful stuff, and if you can derive any pleasure from seeing a furry muppet farting with subtitles! then I hope you and this target tale are very happy together! Be warned, **CRITTERS 4** will be with us very soon!

JOHN HILL

DEAD AGAIN

✖ ✖ ✖ ✖

USA 1991 I.C.I.

DIRECTED BY KENNETH BRANAGH

STARRING KENNETH BRANAGH, EMMA THOMPSON, ANDY GARCIA, DEREK JACOBI, ROBIN WILLIAMS

'Trash fan editor: in arty, mainstream film

aggregation-sandal Read on: Shakespearean wanderer Branagh dips his toe into the Hollywood mainstream with encouraging results in this stylish Hitchcockian thriller replete with sage-natural undercurrents. The fact that Branagh directs, takes on two roles and tries to keep his American accent in check, and manages to pull it off with some credibility is very commendable, but why am I telling you all this? Well at a time when there would appear to be a genuine dearth of quality genre product it can pay dividends exploring different avenues for watchable product, and DEAD AGAIN is a fine case in point, being one of my favorite films of last year, and if I suspect, you let it pass you by on the cinema screen, now is the time to redeem yourself by catching this quicky caper on cassette.

Basically what it is all about is the story of a mysterious woman (Thompson) who suffering from a case of chronic amnesia, and hysterical flashbacks, is put into the care of L.A. private detective Mike Church (Branagh). The plot unfolds to include vicious twists and turns, and under the hypnotic powers of a mysterious antique collector Frankie Madison (Jacobs) reveals the cause of Grace's problems may result from turmoil in a previous life. What happens is a thoroughly compelling journey through the sub-conscious, and in true Hitchcock style the plot is gradually pieced together, allowing the audience to grasp certain clues until the final denouement.

DEAD AGAIN is at times horrendously over the top, and arrogantly melodramatic, but it is knowingly camp, and the film uses this to its advantage. The movie is beautiful, control well looks sumptuous - the inspired black and white portraits being nicely evocative of the era. The climax is a real treat: it's superb editing, and wifely excitement, ending. As you would expect the acting is of a high calibre, Branagh making a persuasive hero, and like his fellow thespians takes it up far beyond the call of duty. Rylan Williams has a talent role as a clever shrink which adds to the film's credibility, and though certain scenes slip in and out of focus too frequently, and a repeated viewing causes the plot inconsistencies to become more glaringly apparent, DEAD AGAIN is recommended for a multitude of reasons. Not least of which a sequence between Branagh and Thompson which is an object lesson to would-be film makers of how effective a combination of pulsating music and hysterical raving can be to create an air of relentless tension, is a stunningly orchestrated outburst. Somewhere up there the Master has a big grin on his face. Highly recommended.

JOHN HILL

DEF BY TEMPTATION



USA 1990 (UNITED ENTERTAINMENT)

DIRECTED BY JAMES BOND III

STARRING JAMES BOND III, RADEEM HARDI SON, BILL NUNN, SAMUEL L. JACKSON, MINNIE GENTRY, RONNY CLANTON, CYNTHIA BOND, FREDDIE JACKSON

The last film to come from Thoma since COMBAT SHOCK (which was saying an awful lot actually). DEF BY TEMPTATION marks the return to big-screen horror, joining the new wave of black film making, headed by the likes of BOYZ N THE HOOD and NEW JACK CITY, though DEF BY TEMPTATION is a far higher class than either, themed 70s vehicles such as BLACULA and BLANKNIGHT. For repressing all of the positive aspects of low budget independent film production DEF BY TEMPTATION... is his films (write with, very stylish and street. Concentrating on a vampire

theme - although the war is never mentioned during the film, and several aspects of vampire legacy are disregarded (appearing in sunlight for instance), director/screenwriter James Bond III has crafted a well above average tale which has a somewhat rushed and jumbled climax, is recommended on all levels.

JOHN HILL

THE LAWMOWER MAN



USA 1992 (FIRST INDEPENDENT)

DIRECTED BY BRETT LEONARD

STARRING PIERCE BROSNAN, JEFF FAHEY, BENNY WRIGHT

Stephen King's short story of suburban horror is re-written, re-scaped and all but thrown out in this attempt to cash-in on the (admittedly tremendously exploitable) theme of virtual reality. Indeed, the giant man himself has taken out a lawsuit against the filmmakers over the use of his name on the marquee of a film that has nothing to do with the source material.



Pierce Brosnan plays the vicarous Dr Angelo, working for a sinister government research establishment. You know its sinister because all the sets are lit in very dark, cold blues and greys. His wife leaves him because when he is not in the laboratory subjecting an ape to virtual reality scenarios, he spends all his time at home, staggered into a rotating armchair with a pair of goggles on doing the same thing to himself.

His experiments hit a bit of a rough spot when said victim goes hermitic, and has to be put down (i.e. shot). Ah, says Angelo in true mad-scientist fashion - but what if I had a human subject to work with? Cue Jeff Fahey as (oh, the amusing but single handman who wants nothing more in life than to go about his business of mowing peoples' lawns, and to stay out of the way on the various small town inhabitants who persecute him and thus set themselves up as victims to be "artificially" executed towards the end of the film.

Angelo plugs (oh, into the system and hey presto!) his IQ, increases dramatically, and begins superhuman powers, getting to grips with local symphoniacs (Jenny Wright) in the process. As usual, things start to go wrong when the men at the top decide that Angelo's research needs a boost for military purposes, and after (oh, the mad stimulating drugs causing

him to become incorporeal). What follows is standard monster-on-the-scape material. The evil townsfolk are disintegrated in a burst of colourful (but low-budget) effects, leading Dr Angelo and Jobe to a final showdown in the virtual reality area.

The main problem with this film is that the plot elements are clichéd and progress very mechanically from one situation to another. The themes of the establishment as monster, the scientist whose work for the goods of mankind becomes corrupted under the establishments influences and characters who 'deserve to die' have been played out too many times (although I still liked the scene where the priest is killed in his own church by someone with a biblical name - a nice, though rather obvious touch).

The true 'bait' of the film, of course are the virtual reality sequences but even these look cheap and the concept is not explored wisely. In the scene with Fahey and Wright which could have really gone over the top with bizarre sexual imagery to direct attention from the has-been snapper. On the good side, Fahey turns in a very believable performance - his transformation by expression from simpleton to genius is well handled and Brosnan is acceptable in a fairly straight forward role. There is undoubtedly a good film waiting to be made about virtual reality, as anyone who has donned one of those plastic helmets will know but unfortunately this wasn't it.

JOHN L. PROBERT

LOST IN TIME



USA 1991 (VCI)

DIRECTED BY ANTHONY HICKOK

STARRING ZACH GALLIGAN, MONIKA SCHNARRE, MARTIN KEMP, BRUCE CAMPBELL, ALEXANDER GODUNOV

Disregard the Lowrents inspired sleeve artwork and the crudely inserted titles on the actual film for LOST IN TIME is in fact WARWORKS 2 - and though WARWORKS needed a sequel like a mouse needs a hat stand, the shoddy re-telling is something of a mystery considering the relative success on video of the original outing. Like the original WARWORKS, LOST IN TIME is a jokey - contemptuous assessment of horrors greeted (oh, here we're using an Alice through the looking glass scenario to journey through such familiar sequences as DRANKNIGHT, ALIEN, THE HAUNTING, DAWN OF THE DEAD) ad nauseum.

While the film never intends to be taken seriously, some of the jokes wear very thin, very quickly. For example Bruce Campbell comes in for yet more slapstick abuse. Like in the original's Marques de Sade episode, director Hickox reveals a punchnut for medieval horror once again - with an overlong black magic episode here which soon collapses into farce. It is very easy to say that "it's only a laugh, don't take it seriously", but while such a statement may hold some credibility, it would be fine if for every stale line such as this, there was a powerful thought-provoking film such as HENRY - PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER, but the fact is that countless films such as LOST IN TIME are becoming far too commonplace, and are by their very nature killing off the genre. Not nearly as clever as it thinks it is, is it?

Fortunately Hickox has returned, his HELL-RAISER III - HELL ON EARTH is a totally different bowl of blood, and after his juvenile output leading up to it, comes as a pleasant surprise. LOST IN TIME however should be avoided unless you thought the HOLIES movies were 'new' or you (take yourself) as a celebrity cameo spitter - this effort has walk on from

endless celebrities - Patrick Macnee, David Carradine, Maxwell Caulfield, Drew Barrymore, Bob Keen etc. What originality!

JOHN HILL

MUTRONICS

(AKA THE GUYVER)



USA/JAPAN 1991 (MEDUSA)

DIRECTED BY SCREAMING MAD GEORGE AND STEVE WANG

STARRING MARK HAMILL, VIVIAN WU, JACK ARMSTRONG, DAVID GALE, MICHAEL BERRYMAN, JIMMY WALKER, JEFFREY COMBS, JINNETA QUIGLEY

There may be a good idea for a film lurking somewhere fully hidden beneath the imitating and toothy plot of *MUTRONICS*, but if there indeed is, it has most certainly been well and truly buried by juvenile handling, poor acting (with the exception of David Gale as Bulcut, the lead villain) and a script which is so utterly infantile as to make many cartoons (which this film appears to be attempting to emulate) seem adult and highbrow. In fact, this really should have been rated U (rather than 15 as it plays like a kiddies adventure matinee, except for some very occasional blood and gore).

The twin directors, Screaming Mad George (makeup man on *BRIDE OF THE REANIMATOR*) and Steve Wang (makeup man on *CREMAINS II: THE NEW BATCH*) who were also responsible for the creature effects, seem intent on making the entire film as childish as possible, characters regularly sporting lines which would have been rejected from *Transformers I*. As a Japanese-American co-production I had hoped for a merging of styles taking Yoshiaki Takaya's comic book hero, *The Guyver*, an apparently indestructible, super armoured individual who battles against evil mutant creatures and giving it a fast paced, stylised treatment. But unfortunately the end result falls far short of these expectations. Produced by Brian Yusa, (director of *BRIDE OF THE REANIMATOR* and *SOCIETY*) and starring *STAR WARS* luminary Mark Hamill (although his part is relatively minor) one might have expected the film to at least look good, but the \$3 million budget does not appear to have been well spent and even the numerous monsters themselves never look like anything other than men in rubber suits.

David Gale, villain from the *REANIMATOR* films, is the only person to come away from this debacle with any credit, his performance at least enjoyable. Composer Matthew Morse does also supply a nice theme, but his music during the film itself is rather inferior.

The directors and writer John Flinn must take full blame for *MUTRONICS*'s total collapse, although it is quite plain that they produced exactly the kind of film which they intended, in the vain hope of luring the *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES* audience.

MARK HOCKLEY

NAILS



USA 1992 (MEDUSA)

DIRECTED BY JOHN FLYNN

STARRING DENNIS HOPPER, ANNE ARCHER, TOMAS MILIAN, CLIFF DEYOUNG

Not really the sort of thing we'd usually covet, but Medusa sent a copy and the movie is inspired by our late Dennis Hopper, so what the hell! With eternal oddball Hopper doing

his renegade cop (read Dirty Harry) impression under the direction of John Flynn, who last shot the totally pointless Steven Seagal potboiler *GUT FOR JUSTICE*, you get some indication as to what's in store in this formula cop thriller. After his partner is gunned down by Cuban hitmen for "knowing too much" (no clichés here!) unorthodox detective Harry (read as! Nails) Hopper digs up the dirt and sets about finding his partner's assassin. With a marginal amount of political corruption and a subplot involving Nails' estranged "where" wife (Archer really skimming it) that is about it please.

Written by Larry Ferguson who had a hand in the *AURYN 3* fiasco, this really is unspectacular formula film making, enlivened only by the wild mis-casting of Hopper in a role he's at least a decade too old for! Hopper always manages to bring some off-the-wall aspect to any of his characters, and certainly the scene here where he showers with his dog, and gratuitously exposes after a villain while stark naked, prove this Hollywood wild-card still has some fire inside him! Worth a look with limited expectations.

JOHN HILL

NAKED LUNCH



USA 1992 (FIRST INDEPENDENT)

DIRECTED BY DAVID CRONENBERG

STARRING PETER WELER, LUDY DAVIS, IAN HOLM, ROY SCHEIDER, JULIAN SANDS

David Cronenberg is a film-maker who has never been afraid to go against the grain, by tackling unique and outrageous subject matter with bravado results. Although his work is always imaginative and professional to a point his out-pur since his career pinnacle *VIDEO DRÖME* has been somewhat disappointing. *THE FLY* for example was a brave step into the mainstream but had its flaws and was not the achievement many saw it as, whereas *DEAD RINGERS* although compelling in parts and a highly personalised film was over-estimated beyond belief.

So to *NAKED LUNCH* "esotic, narcotic, psychotic" the celluloid adaptation of an 'unfilmable' book. Certainly a challenge for any director, even one of Cronenberg's ample ability, but the end result would be best summed up as "ponderous, pretentious, pathetic."

The film's poster states "The book was banned. The film should never have been made." Need I say more! Re-iterate your rational thought and see this for the ponderous bore it really is. Next!

JOHN HILL

PROJECT AKO

(JAPAN 1986 DIRECTED BY KATSUHIKO NISHIJIMA)

DOMINION TANK POLICE

(JAPAN 1989 DIRECTED BY KOICHI NASHIMOTO)



Hot on the heels of Manga Video's outrageous *FIST OF THE NORTH STAR* come these two equally outrageous (though for different reasons) animated releases. Japanese animation, anime, is exhilarating, faster than a speeding bullet, with complex and interesting storylines, full of humour (black and otherwise) and has no comparison with any Western analogue, the outsize-epic cartoons of Disney and Don Bluth are not worthy to kiss their arse. The comic violence of *TOM & JERRY* or *ROAD RUNNER* don't come close to the excesses to be found in

any one of these releases. Coared more towards the adult, the animation is highly stylised and probably follows a traditional pattern in the East, but to these cynical eyes, it's all so refreshingly original and exciting.

PROJECT AKO - In a future city, built from the ruins of a UFO crash 16 years previously, two girls, A-ko and C-ko, start their first day at school. A-ko has superhuman strength and soon discovers a rival for the affection of C-ko in B-ko, a spoiled rich girl who commands huge attack robots to vanquish A-ko and win C-ko's friendship. Meanwhile a monstrous spaceship is smashing its way to Earth, intent on taking C-ko, who they believe is their princess, lost in the crash 16 years before. A-ko and B-ko must temporarily join forces to stop the aliens from destroying the city in the quest. Absolutely hilarious, almost male-free story, with a weird lesbian undertone (probably unintentional), it rates along with bizarre throwaway characters like the alcoholic alien captain and a gigantic Schwarzenegger-muscle female warrior! Highly recommended.

DOMINION TANK POLICE PART I & II to give it its full title, is not so heretically placed as the previous film, but has just as much good natured humour. The police in this future city are furnished with big, destructive tanks to battle the bad guys who, in this case, are trying to steal uncommenced crime (a load of jokes about "taking the pot") for an unspecified reason. After an hour of devastating hell the city, we are asked to join them in acts III and IV for the conclusion of the story, so I guess this comes from a TV series, but is no less effective for that. The characters are a little stereotypical and the animation not so detailed, but there is still more than enough action to keep anyone interested. There's even an impromptu striptease by the bad guys, er, girls.

These films are highly entertaining and translate extraordinarily well - much care is taken over the script and dubbing and it shows. I look forward to all future releases from Manga Video.

MICHAEL SLATTERY

REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID



UK 1991 (MEDUSA)

DIRECTED BY JIM CROOM

STARRING MICHAEL BALFOUR, SAMANTHA PERKINS, JACKIE BROAD, TREVOR PEAKE, BRYAN HEALY

Horror comedies are notoriously difficult to get right, and it would seem that the more effective titles of late (*BE-ANIMATOR*, *BAD TASTE* spring to mind) strike the balance by utilising dubious taste in all areas and dolloping on the gore in a similar vein to some of Morry Hydon's more slapstick outbursts. With this as a yardstick the independent British production *REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID* pretty much succeeds as an effective horror comedy cross-breed.

The story of a half-human, half-goat creature terrorising a family of reeked yokel farmers affords plenty of opportunity for vast amounts of less than subtle humour plus endless farting, belching and cow shit escapades. The creature is reasonably successful and the gore is abundant.

Though the humour never runs out of the toilet, and the production is more suited to the naughty schoolboy market, *REVENGE OF BILLY THE KID* has studied its influences well and knows where it's coming from. Reasonably rewarding for an evening of thoroughly undemanding viewing.

STEVE CHAMBERS

THE RUNESTONE



USA 1992 (V)

DIRECTED BY WILLARD CARROLL

STARRING PETER RIEGERT, JOAN SEVERANCE, ALEXANDER GODINOV

This is basically a monster on the loose scare rating given greater depth by its background in Norse mythology.



The story concerns the titular runestone uncovered by an archaeologist who becomes possessed through magic by his discovery by the beast Fenrir, apparently intent upon bringing about Ragnarok, the Norse version of Armageddon. The premise is a good one and expectations remain relatively high for the first third of the film, although little of real substance transpires. The lead goes about his murderous work and doesn't appear to be doing very much to achieve even a mini-apocalypse, although there is an underdeveloped subplot concerning the desire of the archaeologist turned monster to win back his ex-girlfriend. Finally, with the aid of a returned Norse god (Alexander Godinov from *DIR HARD*), Fenrir is dispatched.

Although this is not a bad film, what could have been a stylish and absorbing apocalyptic thriller is reduced to mere monster mayhem. Director and screenwriter Willard Carroll must take the lion's share of the blame for this as the idea behind it all, based on Mark T. Rogers' novella, was potentially excellent.

On the plus side, there is a persuasive score from David Newman and a pleasing, quirky performance by William Hickey, who also is done away with very early on.

THE RUNESTONE is passable as a time filler, but it's a pity that something more significant was not produced given the strong elements the film-makers had to work with.

MARK HOCKLEY

SHOCK 'EM DEAD



USA 1990 (HIGH FIDELITY)

DIRECTED BY MARK FREED

STARRING TRACI LORDS, TROY DONOHUE, ALDO RAY, STEPHEN QUADRUS

Slip into your spandex leotards, strap on your pink stilettoes and bring along a bag brimming

limbo to we're off to heavy metal horror cliché land! SHOCK 'EM DEAD has sat on the shelf for two years before its UK release, and though not quite as dire as the similarly themed TRUCK OR TREAT I feel that many people would have objected to its staying there gathering dust for ever! The story centres around a typical nerd who sells his soul to what appears to be a voodoo-practising bag-lady in return for becoming the world's biggest rock star! So once gaining his wish, what does he do? He joins a local garage-band who are due to go out on a support slot! This is typical of the film's logic, like the fact that the wimp cum rocker must kill to survive as a pretence for his sin!

SHOCK 'EM DEAD is an alleged comedy, though the jokes don't hide the magnitude of a sill which was probably the main intention. In fact all the film offers is some incredibly out dated TWISTED SISTER era metal and its top pigs and plenty of flesh-flashing for the pubescent infant audience, and finally enough of the only limbo in the film who doesn't shed her outfit is porn queen Traci Lords - weird film or what!

We still await a half decent combination of horror and metal, and this doesn't even come close, so give this a miss and buy a GUNWAVE or go see CRYPTIC live instead!

JOHN HILL

TOP FLOP

Back home we let one of our writers vent their anger on a particular film they feel strongly about - the first victim is SLEEPWALKERS.

SLEEPWALKERS

USA 1992 COLUMBIA TRI-STAR

DIRECTED BY MICK GARRIS

STARRING MADDCHEN AMICK, BRIAN KRAUSE, ALICE KRIGE

Boy, am I going to enjoy this. It can get a bit tedious trying to find some new way to trash or appraise a movie from the American mainstream when in general they are clichéd gloss with a cast of clones and content of previously broken taboos. But the experience of seeing Stephen King and Mick Garris' SLEEPWALKERS on a genuinely large screen so vivid me that I am compelled to try and inform people of how passing a film can be. King is a bastard son of a Spielberg who can be satisfied only for seeing in some entertaining fanzine television in "Amazing Stories". His subsequent work includes FUZZBUCKET and CRITTERS 2, terrific credits for someone sought to helm what was promised to be one of the true light finds of the year. Yet it became a hit, being along with THE LAWMANOWER MAN one of only two straight horror films to make double figure millions in the first Quarter weekend stupor. Would it be perhaps just a tad too cynical to suggest that their success lies with them being tagged with the name of our Maine man, King (who chronologically had very little to do with the infinitely more successful THE LAWMANOWER MAN).

Directed in a television stupor, Garris immediately fails to accommodate the big screen of a scale potential. This is where my furor is should begin. If you are going to film in scope for Saturday cable use that scope, don't play into the demands of video and television, though this may in retrospect hold more to the director's honesty and non-belief in any real threat



cal nature for his project. It is still a shame that I do not appreciate for him not to film to a cinema's dimensions.

What Garris and King believe to be shocking taboo in the incest, overstated splatter and murder of young girls is hardly so. Incest has been explored to greater and more artistic effect in CAT PEOPLE and other movies. The murdered child is a shriveled corpse with the nose but jarring touch of teeth braces and a perfectly kept note behind her presumably equally shriveled ear. "It's a little girl" exclaims a cop character. That is as far as Garris will dare go, wiping out on going after more children and King instead, writing in a dumb plot of luring into very public danger a beautiful High School virgin played by Maddchen Amick. Nobody says it has to be limbo pure limbo being the role Maddchen is called on to play all too successfully so why do the Body's played by Brian Krause and Alice Krige risk High School, his dating a girl he is set to kill and high speed car chases with the police. The latter suggests that the sleepwalkers have an uncontrollable urge for evil exhibitionism. This still doesn't explain why they do not make it easier on themselves by securing victims from out of town. If it makes them look like hot-headed murderers it also makes them seem like the stupidest monsters of film.

The actors come through very well considering exclamation mark. Maddchen Amick suffers the most failing, cute in the imitating guise of a superactive teenage moron with a board of facial contortions normally attributed to Laura Dern which smother character with caricature. Brian Krause is subtly evil until called upon to be utterly evil when his dialogue of Krausemen turns him into a massive idiotic joke. Alice Krige, never before a personal dream doll of mine, has attained a sleek beauty with age, a ghostly beauty which tallies well with a webber of emotions from fear to love. Her narration is that the Krausemen go heretofore, "Little Charles, hasn't he got his mother one-liner?" Supporting players also do the best they can with their casting burdens. Another idiotic exercise is that of the cameo, fine when cleverly introduced but dumb when entire scenes are centred around the gawking celebs with no furthering of the plot enjoyed by it. Mark Hamill's early appearance as a cop could have been wished for as a main character, but the shoddy show-ins of Stephen King, Clive Barker, Todd Hooper and John Landis are merely intrusive. Ron Perlman's appearance is dubious for a wholly unique reason in that he is facially uglier than Brian Krause's first stage make-up which he so closely resembles and could have saved the production time and money by having them forego that work and having him to stand-in as the first stage monster. Of the effects we have some nifty computer blending and morphing, but the latex work

...ing them on [a] common, contemporary, intelligent, ... the mutants of THE CURSE and the thing in CAMERON'S CLOSET. Though a lanky humor we are called on to believe in too much. The noddling cat forms though clever not too long ago are suddenly familiar from a number of effects in a succession of popular adverts that bridge our most popular soaps. The invisibility gag though acceptable to movie monsters is strangely inexplicable when applied to a motorcar. Implausibility abounds with the most humorous of these involving a regular cat that races up a tree then crashes head first through a tight little window-pane. Any normal cat would hit the window and crash to the ground.

To cap it off imitating 50's and 60's music is incorporated to indicate the possible age of the sleepwalkers. If the equivalent was British maybe we could expect "Chippy Chippy Chippy" and "It's a Tiger" on the soundtrack. King is said to affect these more than any other of his creations. They say the greatest fear is that of the unknown also, but with no clear myths these were certainly unknown to us and failed to astonish us still. An idea was at least explored to tell us something about the sleepwalkers in Brian's class read poem, so why not more said in that opportunity. In such an unsuccessful movie, I guess it fails to matter.

PAUL HIGSON

SPLIT SECOND

UK 1992 (V)

DIRECTED BY TONY MAYLAM

STARRING: RUTGER HAUER, KIM CATTRALL, NEIL DUNCAN, MICHAEL J. POLLARD, ALUM ARMSTRONG



Thoroughly derivative monster eager that blatantly rips-off everything from ALIEN to BLADE RUNNER, but somehow manages to retain its own personality.

Rutger Hauer is the burnt-out cop in a future London plagued by ecological crisis, who is trading a mysterious psycho, who may or may not be the devil himself. Director Maylam who helmed the banned THE BURNING (flits between lensular series like a pro, and his past second should tip you off to the fact he's not afraid to portray explicit violence to spice up the proceedings.

Rutger Hauer sleepwalks his way through while newcomer Duncan provides comic relief and gets all the best lines and poor old Kim Cattrall is totally wasted as the token female. SPLIT SECOND is nothing new that's for sure, and despite a terribly vague and confusing conclusion it is worth a look to prove that we can easily compete with the Yanks in the cheap and nasty rip-off stakes.

JOHN HILL

TIME OF THE BEAST

Q

USA 1992 (R)

DIRECTED BY JOHN R. BOWEY

STARRING: BRION JAMES, CAROLYN ANN CLARK, MELTON RAPHAEL MURRELL

Brion James, one of the screen's most dependable heroes (C LETHAL WEAPON 2, HOUSE 3) here twitches sides to portray the hero in this brainless, plotless, juvenile caper concerning a genetic experiment gone awry. With PREDATOR styled thermal p.o.v. shots, endless mauling around dandy-to comfies and similar ALIENness, this sony endeavor cannot muster a single frame of inspiration throughout its interminable duration. With the cast scenery-chewing to their heart's content and an indecently shoddy monster, this loser genuinely contains no redeeming properties whatsoever. Clowns should be in a circus, not behind camera! One indeed!

JOHN HILL

TWIN PEAKS - FIRE WALK WITH ME

USA 1992

DIRECTED BY DAVID LYNCH

STARRING: KYLE MACLACHLAN, SHERYL LEE, MOIRA KELLY, DAVID BOWIE, CHRIS ISAAK, HARRY DEAN STANTON, RAY WISE

TWIN PEAKS was a weird little TV series, a curious mix of murder mystery, small town melodrama, soap opera, backwoods Manchacanism, Stephen King style horror and surreal meta-text. Slow moving, digressive, occasionally rambling, often incoherent, sometimes looking like it was all made up as it went along, it was a fairly soft, lightening, beautiful and infuriating experience. The movie is more of the same. Described as a prequel, a return to the last days of Laura Palmer's short and demon-haunted life, it runs more like an addendum to the TV series, sort of a filling-in of the blanks, a colouring of details, without, that is, giving anything away (so, for example, the eventual fates of Dale Cooper and Audrey Horne, amongst others, left suspended at the climax of the TV series, remain unknown). The first twenty minutes work the best. A flash-back to the events immediately following the murder of Teresa Banks, Bob's first victim, featuring two new FBI recruits, played by Chris Isaak and Kiefer Sutherland, they expositively mix black comedy and police procedure with dream logic and a vague sense of dread. The rest of the movie, coming on the last week of Laura Palmer's life, is overlong, rambling, incoherent and occasionally, in the dream sequences and the night club scene particularly, extraordinary. The grand finale, featuring an angel straight out of religious kitsch, once again highlights David Lynch's propensity for the gratuitous happy ending. Never less than entertaining, rarely more than boring, TWIN PEAKS - FIRE WALK WITH ME is

probably just misinterpreted as Lynch's gift to "Peakers" everywhere, an encore, a curtain call, one last shot for all you cast-out there. It's load 'n' lay, features one belated soundtrack and a couple of great performances, from Sheri Lee as Laura and Ray Wise as her dad, but ultimately, like the TV series, doesn't quite add up to the sum of its parts.

DAVID ALEXANDER

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER

USA 1992 (GUILD DISTRIBUTION)

DIRECTED BY ROLAND EMMERICH

STARRING: JEAN - CLAUDE VAN DAMME, DOLOPH LUNDGREN, ALLY WALKER, ED O'BROSS, TINY LISTER

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER is the Hollywood debut from German filmmaker Roland Emmerich who also helmed the actioner MOON 44 last year. Seemingly assuming that if you combine the pulling-power of two half-price Schwarzeneggers in a single package then you will come up with a full-size hit, indeed this two are better than one policy has proved relatively successful at the box-office.

The setting is Vietnam 1969, and in the heat of battle Sergeant Scott (Lundgren) flips his lid and sets about massacring his regiment and the local villages until, controlled by one of his own men, Luc Deveraux (Van Damme) and the result of this conurbation is their mutual demise. A quick switch to modern day USA and a terrorist attack on the Hoover Dam is thwarted by a team of fearless special soldiers, two of whom would appear to be Scott and Deveraux! Obviously what we have here is a secret military experiment in creating the ultimate fighting force by maximizing dead troops and brainwashing them until they become thoughtless fearless, robotic killing machines. However things take a twist when Deveraux starts to regain his true memories and flees the living dead legion, aided by TV reporter Veronica Roberts (Walker). A similar chain of events also leads to Scott gathering in past thoughts, and once again he flips, massacres all and sundry and heads out after his achy soul fuelled by revenge!

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER as to be expected I suppose from the pedigree of its lead leads into prison its science fiction elements, especially as FRANKENSTEIN-esque plot threads in favour of standard gang-bro heroes, and it must be said, very large doses of ultra violent bloodletting. We get only the slightest hints behind the process which created this inhuman platoon, and even less insight as to where they get their incredible physical strength from. However if you're a fan of violent action, or are just interested in the cyber scene as a whole UNIVERSAL SOLDIER will certainly appeal. On the acting side of things Lundgren has the most fun portraying a villain, especially relishing his character's penchant for singing together Jewellery made from human ears! Van Damme who takes top billing is now reaching the stage where he can almost sing together a line of audible dialogue and Ally Walker as the token female does little more than scream, swear and play potential victim.

Certainly UNIVERSAL SOLDIER looks good, especially on the big screen and obviously

with its thought-provoking and visually impressive sequences, winning it a cult status. Here, on the 'Cinema' page, 'Monstroid' also has links to further James Cameron information, including his last feature, 'The Abyss', and 'The Terminator', but despite the attention of the 'Cinema' page, Cameron, and all of his UNIVERSAL work, is no TERMS reader.

In the end, CINEPHILES, EITHER go and see it, or don't, but a good page to keep on.

STEVE CHAMBERS

XTRO II: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER



UNCLASSIFIED (FIRST INDEPENDENT)

DIRECTOR: LES THOMAS, BRIMLEY DAVEN, PCRE

STARRING: VIN VINCENT, PALL KIDDO, TONY BUCKMAN, JANET FRANKLIN, NICHOLAS LEE

Probably the most blatant ALIEN sequel of all time, XTRO II is thoroughly unoriginal stuff, and the cynical tactic of using its release to coincide with that of ALIEN 3 just adds to the unadvised pilfering.

A secret underground facility experimenting in travelling between dimensions, runs into trouble when a team of scientists fails to return, and the only survivor seems to have brought back some alien lifeform for the ride! It should then come as no surprise that next on the menu is a chest-thumping sequence, followed by endless corridor mauling, and a lumbering monster on the loose picking off victims one at a time!

Having nothing whatsoever to do with the original XTRO (which wasn't that original itself when you think about it, but at least it had some interesting imagery), this sequel settles for a carbon copy of ALIEN, greeted by, though a must be said that in its favour, the production values are very high, and director Davenport has shed his workmanlike approach of his first encounter, and here keeps the action crackling along at a fair pace. With a cast seemingly doing it for the money, including Vincent who seems to be stuck in this sort of thing these days, and Buckman, who was in her bikini days



in the CANNIBAL FILM film, is transformed into a veritable James Packer clone with about the same acting ability. XTRO II can be viewed as either a totally derivative cash-in, or a reasonably stylish low budget shocker - the decision is yours.

STEVE CHAMBERS



MONSTROID WRITER'S RATINGS GRID

	DAVID ALEXANDER	STEVE CHAMBERS	RICHARD GRIFFITHS	JOHN HILL	MARK HOCKLEY	NICK JOHNSON	KEN MILLER	JOHN L. PROBERT	MICHAEL SLATTER
									
ALIEN 3		3	2	4	3	2	4	3	5
BASIC INSTINCT			3	2	2	4			4
BATMAN RETURNS		4	1	3	3		5	4	1
BILL & TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY		3	4	4	4		4		5
CAPE FEAR		1	2	3		2	2	5	5
FREDDY'S DEAD	1	1	2	2		1		3	3
FREEJACK		2		3				2	2
LAWNMOWER MAN		4		3		2	3	3	4
LOST IN TIME		2	3	1	3		1	4	
MUTRONICS	0			2	1		3		4
NAKED LUNCH	4	2	1	1		2	3	2	4
OMEN 4	0			2				1	0
SLEEPWALKERS		3	1	3		2		4	
SPLIT SECOND	2	2		3		3	2		3
UNIVERSAL SOLDIER		3	4	4	3	3	4		



SCREAM INTERNATIONAL

THE BONEYARD

USA 1990

DIRECTED BY JAMES CUMMINS

STARRING ED NELSON, DEBORAH ROSE NORMAN, PELL, PHYLLIS DILLER, JAMES EUSTERN

THE BONEYARD is one of those low budget shockers which feature prominently in American glossy publications, but then seem to disappear from sight and never get an airing in the UK.

The film starts with two policemen contacting a retired psychic in view of investigating the mysterious deaths of three children. The action then switches to a mortuary on the brink of closure, where the reason for the infant's demise would appear to be a dormant EVIL DEAD type curse, which soon re-animates the kids and leads the protagonists into a nightmare-ish encounter.

THE BONEYARD is the directorial debut of FX man Cummins (STRANGE INVADERS, HOUSE) and is a surprisingly lively first offering. The puzzled, charmed children are particularly creepy, though the same can't be said for the twelve foot mutant puddle which appears towards the end of the movie. The cast includes a few surprises, not least Ed Nelson star of ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS and producer of THE FLESH EATERS, also in there is Phyllis Diller (GHOST SCHOOL GELS) as the sinister morgue manageress, who herself mutates into a grotesque monstrosity, which really should be seen to be unbelievable. THE BONEYARD is low on plot though high on incident, and manages to deliver some genuinely effective shocks among a more ridiculous moments, and while it may never be regarded as even a minor classic, it is better than a lot of the budge available presently, and deserves some sort of UK release.

STEVE CHAMBERS

CHINESE GHOST STORY 2

HONG-KONG 1991

DIRECTED BY CHING SIU TUNG

STARRING LESLIE CHEUNG

The original CHINESE GHOST STORY was, I suppose, the film that first brought Western attention to the new wave of oriental fantasy film-making. Although by and large a slant-eyed re-tread of Sam Raimi's work, CHINESE GHOST STORY was admittedly one of the best of its ilk to emerge from the not entirely inspiring oriental scene. Despite being bereft of a coherent story, the movie carved a niche for itself amongst Western sensibilities due to its outlandish visual style and unique sequences. Inevitably there were bound to be sequels, Hong Kong is no less prolific than the West for rehashing successful properties. This first follow-up leads on directly after the original and has the hero, Ning, returning home after his ordeal, before a wild chain of events first lead him to be imprisoned, before once more

getting mixed up in a storyline of spellbinding confusion concerning various spooks and demons, while our hero becomes obsessed with a mysterious maiden who he seems convinced is living from the previous instalment. About half-way through, CHINESE GHOST STORY 2's plot becomes such a chore to follow that I simply gave up and immersed myself in its visuals, which are at times impressive. The film crabs ideas mercilessly from such diverse sources as Lovecraft, Rambo, Leone, Karasawa, THE EXORCIST, TREMORS and NIGHT OF THE DEMON and hurls the lot into an over-flowing melting pot from which the action spews forth like a blast, violently colourful, topped-off MTV nightmare! Despite a storyline only laudable by the actual writers, where protagonists inexplicably fly around, and a crummy rubber monster with chicken legs lumbers in and out of the proceedings, CHINESE GHOST STORY 2 is surely uneventful, and though hardly a classic, is above-average for this sort of material.

JOHN HILL

GODZILLA Vs KING GHIDRA

JAPAN 1992

DIRECTOR AND WRITTEN BY KAZUKI OHMORI

Now, before you start to read this, I must point out that this is not your usual, fun poking GODZILLA review. Panning out the silly rubber suits, bad effects and dubbing and the whole insanity of the Japanese monster genre. No way.

This 20 million dollar Sci-Fi film is packed full of action, excellent effects and a story line that would confuse a memu member. In 1992 a UFO appears in Tokyo. The Future Men as they are called ask to meet the Japanese Government, which it arranged. They tell them that in 2204 Japan no longer exists, destroyed by nuclear pollution when Godzilla reawakens and attacks Tokyo. They say that they can save Japan by going back to 1944 and taking Godzilla off this time a dinosaur off his island so that in 1954 H bomb testing won't turn him into Godzilla. Muga monster. This is arranged but while on the island they leave behind 3 Doras who turn into King Ghidora when the H bomb is dropped. They mean to 1992 to kill Ghidora attacking Japan it turns out that in 2204 Japan exists the World. Without nuclear weapons they were free to buy up the World through economic strength and the future men from the Earth Union want to destroy Japan now before they can start to buy up the World. But Godzilla the Dinosaur, resting under the sea, is hit by a nuclear sub and turns into the giant monster. Using we all know and love. Heading straight for Tokyo he kills Ghidora and then turns on Japan only to have Ghidora brought back from the future as a cyborg and the main battle begins.

This is undoubtedly the best Godzilla film ever made. Crammed with special effects, outlandish actors, cyborgs, great acting and how much atmosphere, this is a must see for all Godzilla breaks and S.F. fans alike. With

Casting our nets worldwide, we scour the international scene to bring you coverage of movies either awaiting a UK release, and in certain cases, titles destined never to receive one!

GODZILLA VS MONTURA THE MOTH MONSTER nearing completion costing a reported 28 million dollars it will be interesting to see if they can top this epic. Personally I can't see it, but then again I am a Reverend of the Church of Godzilla and he is our Lord so how can I say anything against him?

GREG LAMB

NEKROMANTIK 2

GERMANY 1991

DIRECTED BY JORG BUTTGERTS

STARRING MONIKA M, MARK REEDER, SIMONE SPORI, BEATRICE M, WOLFGANG MULIER



The first NEKROMANTIK was a taboo-breaking, stomach-churning, exploitation entry made for a postage by a team of talented individuals from Berlin. The film headed a new genre for screen depravity in Germany of all places, and its artistic approach to such an unmentionable subject earned the film quite a few fans worldwide.

So to the inevitable sequel which begins with a flashback to the 'climax' of the first episode, and then proceeds under its own steam, as an attractive young woman (Monika M) returns to the original film's hero's freshly buried corpse, takes it back to her flat and attempts to bring it back to life 'Sleeping Beauty' fashion with a kiss - when this fails she tries less logical approaches, the details of which I'll leave to your dreary imaginations. The plot takes a twist when Miss M meets a 'friend' boyfriend and strikes up a seemingly normal relationship in fact she seems to regret so much that she hooks up her deceased lover's cadaver though she does remain a rather intimate peep of his anatomy, wrapped in clingfilm in the fridge, as a postscript (reminder of times gone by). However it would seem you just can't keep a good necrophile dead, as Miss M's thoughts revert back to her past obsession, much to the dismay of her boyfriend.

NEKROMANTIK 2 is a far more accomplished picture than the original in terms of technical flair, however unlike the former outing it lacks

the violent path which made **NEKROMANTIK** is, such an unforgettable experience. Our cinematic antibodies so to speak have built up and such material no longer retains its shock value, which is a pity for **NEKROMANTIK 2** has little else on offer. The movie is at times needlessly silly, a film within a film suggests shows **Büttgen** is having fun with abstract symbolism, but it adds nothing at the main body of the work. Similarly a sequence at a dinner-party where guests sit in front of a television showing scenes of soul mutilation may focus on the character's modified fascination with death and decay, but moreover it was probably included to provide some cheap mondo titillation. As for the soundtrack please!

The original **NEKROMANTIK** will probably remain the ultimate examination of necrophilia on film. Although the Belgian film **LUCKE-NECROTIC** (AGL 5) is probably the most remarkable, and let us totally forget Britain's redundant entry into corpse flicking art **LIVING DOIL** which was far too coy to cover the subject with any courage. Still **NEKROMANTIK 2** has its share of depravity and readers may want to make their own mind up. The film turned up at London's famous Scala club throughout September and should see repeat viewings in the state.

NICK JOHNSON

NIGHTMARE CONCERT

✱ ✱ ✱

(UN L'ATELIER DEL CERVELLO - I VOLTI DEL TERRORE)

ITALY 1991

DIRECTED BY LUCIO FULCI

STARRING LUCIO FULCI, DAVID E. THOMPSON, RIA DE SIMONE, SACHA DARWIN, BRETT HULSEY

As I'm sure you are all aware, prolonged exposure to the more degenerate moments of Italian gore guru Lucio Fulci's infamous output will leave you a bitter, twisted soul with an uncorroborable urge to commit copycat carnage, or so we are led to believe if you take in some of the national savings of our moral protectors. Who would have thought though, that the latest paragon of such nonsensical ideas would be none other than Fulci himself - for the main thrust of **NIGHTMARE CONCERT** is an investigation into such insane theories.

After everyone had long written off Fulci whose output since **THE NEW YORK RIPPER**

had been a pale imitation of his former glories, most entries deserving their obscure fate (see **AEONIGMA**, **MURDEROCK**, **THE DEVIL 5**, **HONEY**, **ZOMBIE 3** etc. etc.) got ready for their untimely filmobath, which is a lot for the lower exploitation rate splatter. A nuptial car ignites pulsating brains, a naked girl straggled to a table is graphically chiselled for cannibals, the purposes, and suddenly we're off into the most unusual film I've seen in quite some time. The plot is incredibly vague: the main narrative concerning Fulci's apparent degeneration into schizophrenia - everywhere he looks he sees graphic scenes of dismemberment, achieving his depraved film output. Seeing such a legend of solid cinematic lumbering about in form of the camera is an unusual experience to say the least.

NIGHTMARE CONCERT is in actual fact several unfinished projects rolled into one can of film, the result being uneven and confusing; the plot is wildly disjointed and action frequently screams to a halt so a further scene of bloodletting can take place. By its bizarre climax, **NIGHTMARE CONCERT** has become a greatest hits package of goes-out cinema heads are bashed off, chainsaws whirled with wild abandon, there are numerous throat slittings, eye gougings and even a host of microwave carnage to keep the most demanding gore-faithful stocked up for quite some time.

While the film may not be vintage Fulci, it is undeniably bizarre, though wildly garbled and self-indulgent beyond belief, perhaps even an epitaph to every gore-bounds lunatic on film. For those nostalgic for the heady days of **THE BEYOND** and **HOUSE BY THE CEMETERY** this may fill the void slightly, but at a time when the transient purveyors of sick celluloid are over the border in Germany, **NIGHTMARE CONCERT** seems somewhat behind the times. Incidentally even in view of **ZOMBIE FLESHTEATERS** being back on the shelves, don't hold your breath for this getting a UK release - times haven't changed that much!

STEVE CHAMBERS

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

✱ ✱ ✱ ✱

USA 1968

DIRECTED BY TOM SAVINI

STARRING TONY TODD, PATRICIA TALLMAN, TOM TOWLES, McKEE ANDERSON

WILLIAM BUTLER, KATE FINNITRAN, BILL MORLEY

A lot of blood has passed under the bridge since George Romero and John Russo's masterful **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** all but redefined the horror genre in the late sixties. And after two sequels, both regarded as classics in their own right, it was screaming of a dubious decision to go back to the beginning and start it all over, and although this 40th anniversary under the directorial control of Tom Savini won't change the face of horror like its influence, it is still a time honouring, and its non-memorial in the UK remains a great mystery.

Prior knowledge of the original **NIGHT** is essential to fully appreciate some of the plot developments in this re-make, right from the start has preconceptions are altered, as what we expect to happen, after being so familiar from the original is turned around. Quite whether such a play is the ideal avenue is uncertain, and certainly the film offers little in the way of new shocks, the story itself sticking very closely to the series classic.

After the initial graveyard opening which opens up a clever twist, the house of the piece Barbara Tallman flees to the safety of a seemingly deserted farmhouse as she did all those years ago, and from therein the familiar saga takes place: as the army of living dead encircle the terrified.

Surprisingly, coming from such a renowned 'bloodletter' as Savini, the pace is quite minimal, his opening for suspense instead, though considering what has gone before is such as **DAY OF THE DEAD** and even the new **BRAIN DEAD**, such a policy is strangely undervalued. The acting is of a high standard, Tallman as Barbara is particularly effective as a far more resourceful and liberated character, in fact it is she who is the main focus of attention, obviously in the 90s an independent woman was seen as more compelling than an independent black man, though in his role of Ben, the original's pivotal character, Tony Todd is fine, his outcome full of sacrificial irony. The excellent Tom Towles (Ous of **HENRY** fame) is perfect as the oblivious Harry Cooper, whose character also suffers a different fate to previously. If I was to criticise the film, the reason for the dead rising is felt even more vague than before, and the plot wades rather too close to the original, but the new **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** is a claustrophobic and compelling movie, and surely with such a pedigree and obvious audience, some resourceful distributors ought to be going out of their way to get this film into the UK.

NICK JOHNSON



CAN I COUNT ON YOUR VOTE NEXT THURSDAY?

TERROR TYPE

**NEW STORIES FROM
THE TWILIGHT ZONE**

Ed Martin & H Greenberg
(Warner Books £8.99)

strange. In the fourth dimension and low-synchro finding shell space, a cool local '81 Smiths is this bumper collection of imperial shell stories used as source material for the coloured and named episode of THE TWILIGHT ZONE series. It's an impressive portrait of silent including shadowy scribbles from the likes of Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, The Bumpin' Man and Robert Silverberg. To See The Invisible Man. The Twisting Zone episodes unfortunately did not live up to the promise of most of the outstanding shorts in the collection, no doubt hampered by budget constraints and the occasional other dimensional spanner in the works. Director Wes Craven springs to mind here, limping perched on top of this world of shadow and light is Robert R. McCarron's 'Nightmare' entry. A little less successful the previous film produced with a similar theme, becoming quite a miserable episode in the often forgettable, B-grade series.

If you're a Zine completist then by all means make room on that bookshelf: if you just want to enjoy some good fiction then be patient: it just might make its own way there itself. (cue THAT music)

HEATHEN

Shawn Hutson

(Little, Brown \$13.99)

horror literature is thing this, white flag, in Stuart Hultsen's face. Three early, shock-like, TRIATHLON and SHADOWS' born in the post-apocalyptic lures of graphic, his trop's hushed concealment. Hultsen has made an undeniable and sometimes unrivaled come impact with the unrefracted, the compromise approach to horror literature. With "ANASIS" and "BINGED" how, ever a became apparent that Hultsen was intent on taking the genre steadily away from the well-trodden ground of ancient curses and flesh eating monster scenarios. The publication of "HEATHEN" is an effort to move the genre's passage toward emerging, once hallowed ground, smoking, and something somewhere between the light and dark fiction territory. It is here where Hultsen sets about his formidable craft, crafting every note and protocol in assured, thriller writing with more demerol relief.

Hutton again explores more complex terrain as opposed to other worthy threat-hunters cleverly retains elements of the supernatural with *The Sons Of Madridge*, a secret society of necrotists and purveyors of all things nasty. "BIFATHEN" uncovers the group's hidden and social activities with the help of a midwest author who intent on discovering the truth about her husband's death in a questionable accident. In her investigation

the two factions become increasingly enmeshed in bloody gun battles to locate an ancient book which while holding our heroines answers to her husband's demise is also vital to The Sons Of Midgley's continued murderous existence. Needless to say, anyone wants to be a loser.

Huisman in a commendable display of restraint holds back the real book count until the climactic chapter 14 (TAM DBS-VBO where lashings of violence, shoot-outs and aerial sprays dwarf the proceedings, doubtless not disappointing the graphic, horror-loving core of Huisman's readership).

But what makes "HATHEN" stand out against the head and shoulders above the rest of the Haysen has successfully harked both horror and thriller elements into a literary hybrid which he holds a knife to the throat of. "HATHEN" is Haysen's most accomplished work to date: the literary equivalent to Raydon Roudette except the chambers of Haysen's "HATHEN" are all bulk loaded.

**JAMES HERBERT, BY
HORROR HAUNTED**

Ed Stephen Jones

(N.E.L. £17.99)

When peas leave for a handiwork but in return is a recommended and fastidious overview of the King's length, and productive association with former literature, spurring his layers of printed letters from hungry, instantly homicidal pea-soups, though in the more commercially accessible theaters of today.

Steve Jones and Methuen's publishers obviously agreed that a neo was long overdue and the book, whilst awarded of reasonable success no matter what lies between the covers, does make a fine start at presenting entertaining pieces of information both culled from the book-odd and prime life of Britain's most popular peddler of dark fiction.

Preserved in a series of original and brilliant observations the book contains much expanding scribbles from fellow authors and those with a hand for talent slipped somewhere in the big bad world of horror fiction. Stephen King's sullenish frenetic mindfuckian corpse, Herbert's *Emergence*, similar to that of the late great *Sei Shonku* and their explosion into the British mass scene – nothing being the same ever again and influencing a whole generation of his talent. Those grown talent Stephen King and Gallagher also take turns to dip into the blood and inkwell and offer their tributes to the man who began horror literature on this side of the Atlantic.

In *12 "th. Horner [Harriet]"* is an egerency, clopesh of Herbert deni which should make the pocketers rich of Horner enthusiasts and the general book buying public alike. James himself emerges from the ground-level proceedings as a gay young man your mother in most approachable and genuine about his work. As one newspaper quote in the book describes him: "Real life. James Herbert is to read what Be-

Edited by Gareth James

Laguerre is in handwriting. But, top or bottom?

THE HOODOO MAN

Steve Harris

(Headline £15.99)

If I'm honest I slipped Steve Harris. AGAIN. TO SPAIN! back where it came to the local bookshop after scanning the books cover gilt of unimpressive gilt. Harris sports tangos and terraces in peril. The linguist's late genre shamelessly explored in the late '70s and early '80s, can barely still a very non-always, and any deals I did in a possible major row. British humor later emerging went the way of the bookshop out door.

So it was with a certain amount of resignation that a review copy of *THE HOODLOO* MAB's was cranked open to its first chapter. So is relative newcomer Steve Harris any good? Well in your face initially is that *HOODLOO* is well written, very well written. And about a quarter of the way into its pages a comfortable feeling of déjà vu settled on this reviewer. Steve Harris writes as well as Stephen King. You just never heard that.



One-sided love month (a perfect 5). Both but not one, writes I. L. Jones's S.S. Stephen King yep whopper. This do now, and mine grudgingly, a British author does. Steve Harris's BOOOOOO! MMS, needs both the characterisation and even in detail so long exclusive to the bang, terror, blending it with plot and situations original to Harris's own enhanced breed of horror.

Indeed, BROODMO is reminiscent of KINGSLEY BREAD WOMAN in subject matter and influence – Kingsley's John Smith everyman persona alienated by a society's central character, Daniel, Stafford, intense, beleaguered, and credible thanks to HARRIS' unflinching eye for normal daily life. Stafford turns out to be a resilient psyche, thanks to a bullet through the brain at five years' age, which has given him the ability to see into the hearts of others, and himself. Unfortunately,

Horror's missing are (possibly) **TS**. The Hooded Man, a son of five-fingered, psychoserial killer, who also possesses the precious movie know-how. Stillgood, through his visions, tries to alter the future for the better: the Hooded Man, however, has very different ideas.

Highlights of the book, and there are many, include a quite outstanding scene involving a patrol tanker and speeding car colliding at an isolated crossroads with grippingly impressive results and not to mention splendid half-bug inducing details. Perhaps somewhat churlish, the climax to the novel, with its psychic confrontation is a little too hulkunatory and distances the reader slightly from the proceedings, but is fairly a black mark compared to the rest of the books reader-stimulating.

Steve Harris deserves to be a brand name after this one and once in paperback I've a feeling that THE HOODED MAN will do just that.

JUST PUBLISHED:

Sci Fi/Fantasy

QUARANTINE

Greg Egan

(Legend £14.99 HBK)

Debut novel from Australian author a tale of bio-engineering and isolation of earth's solar system from the rest of the universe.

HOMECOMING

Orson Scott Card

(Legend £14.99 HBK)

Book one of a major new fantasy series from the winner of both Hugo and Nebula Science Fiction awards. Artificial intelligence threatens catastrophe, war on a hitherto peaceful planet after several failures.

HIDDEN ECHOES

Mike Jefferies

(Grafton £8.99 PBK)

Dark fantasy. The clocks of Creation are winding down and earth is being visited in plagues of frogs and strange beasts as reality fades. Deviation of the world will follow, unless an answer on the other side can be found.

New Science Fiction/Fantasy publishers MILLLENIA celebrate their arrival with three title releases: **"THE FOREVER KING"** (Moby Goshen & Wanda Morris £14.99 HBK), **"A FIRE UPON THE DEEP"** (Victor Vance £11.99 HBK) and **"THE WHITE MISTS OF POWER"** (Annette & Busch £11.99 HBK).

Horror

CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

Dan Simmons

(Headline £15.99 HBK)

Goth author Simmons brings us a tale of vampires and AIDS (as is not a comedy) when a relief worker discovers an orphaned child holds an incredibly well developed immune system. The child in question comes from Romania and more specifically

Transylvania. I think you can imagine the rest out for yourselves.

THE FUNHOUSE

Dean Koontz

(Headline £15.99 HBK)

Koontz back catalogue continues to keep Headline books afloat (can I say that?) (You just did - Ed). Again is yet another reprint of a Koontz pseudonym Owen West and the one they made that puns-hungry don't move about. Antiquated, tedious and yes, pointless. Koontz completes only.

CATHEDRAL

Ian MacLellan

(Headline £15.99 HBK)

First novel that deals with, well, a cathedral basically. A school boy confronts his demons from the past when a place of worship becomes an observant. The terror soon follows.

MIDNIGHT'S LAIR

Richard Laymon

(Headline £15.99 HBK)

Laymon's Richard Kelly pseudonym first published by the defunct W.H. Allen concern in 1988. Pleasing B-movie stuff about a group of tourists trapped in an underground cavern and surviving upon the brutal creatures that frequent there.

Little Brown publishers have a horror anthology, slated for December **NARROW HOUSES** edited by Peter Crowther. The blessed array of contributors (predominantly new authors) include Stephen Gallagher, Peter James and Chris Williamson. Also putting pen to paper are Ray Bradbury, Robert Holdstock and Jonathan Carroll.

Gareth Jones

A YOUTH IN BABYLON

David F. Friedman

(£5.99)

For anyone who gives a hoot, David Friedman in the American exploitation showman who produced such notorious pictures as **BLOOD FEAST**, **TWO THOUSAND MANIACS**, **ILSA SHE WOLF OF THE SS** and **THE EROTIC ADVENTURES OF ZORRO**. He was also president of the Adult Film Association of America for a time and this is the first part of his autobiography (to be continued in **KINGS OF BABYLON**) is documents in a nostalgic, pleasantly readable style his early adventures in the movie world up to and including his association with Hershel Gordon Lewis.

The book is worth reading for a number of reasons, one being that it is a very personal (and highly believable) account of the American exploitation industry in the 1950's and 60's. His memories from the shooting of individual pictures are often amusing and always of interest - how Karen Black's boyfriend paid them to cut her nude scenes from **THE PRIME TIME** or how he and Lewis found that to shoot in some hotel camps they too would have to disrobe!

Looking something for (nothing?) like other oddball/low-budget pictures, one of them, **Two Thousand Maniacs** came in with the necessary (unnecessary) introduction.

James' **BLOOD FEAST** and **TWO THOUSAND MANIACS** will appreciate Friedman's comment on the star of those two films, that of all the attractive girls he worked with during his years in film-making, he only had carnal knowledge of one - and that one was Connie Hales! With an illustrated centre section, this book is a must read for those with an interest in the poverty-row side of American movie history.

John L. Probert



ATTACK OF THE B MOVIE MAKERS

J.R. Bookwalter (1991)

Bookwalter, director of **THE DEAD END DOOR** and **BLOOD NINJA**, has written, in affectionate, tribute to ultra-low budget filmmakers David DeGrazia and Fred Olen Ray. The book is actually a computer-produced manuscript that once and now to read but there is obviously a problem with photo reproduction as they really are awful - luckily there aren't that many. The subject matter purports to be an in-depth look at low budget filmmaking, but other than a few naming chapter on distribution, there is little information that any aspiring director could use. Both Ray and DeGrazia talk frankly and are even genuinely interesting at times. Unfortunately the writer does let too much madding (even though he occasionally tries not to) but simply refuses to accept that most of his subjects' films are pretty crap - admittedly not all: there are a few gems in a don't-take them at all seriously bubble gum kind of way. I'm thinking **GRIFFOZODON**, **DR. ALEN STEEL** and **LACE TOMB**, **DEEP SPACE CHAINSAW HORRORS** but in general, I'm not sure following their example is such a great idea when you think films like **DARK STAR**, **MAD MAN STREET TRAVEL**, **HENRY PORTER OF A SERIAL KILLER** etc. etc. were made on similar budgets. The book is an entertaining read though with a useful bibliography of both directors at the end.

Michael Gutter

Thundercrack!

What would you expect from a film with the title THUNDERCRACK!? 'Weather formations over Nevada and the south western United States' perhaps? Indeed that was the description that accompanied the film when it first came through British customs. However, without any mention of hard-core sex, pecked cucumbers and a bestial marriage, such a synopsis could not be further from the truth.

Gaining notoriety as a midnight attraction at the infamous Nuart Theatre in west L.A. and frequently seen here at London's Scala cinema, this XXX rated epic features the wonderful Mason Eaten (with positively demonic eyebrows and a vomit covered wig) as the nostalgic, voyeuristic, alcoholic widow Gen Hammond. A woman with quite a few dark secrets up her sleeve - her deceased husband (killed by carnivorous lions) lies pickled in jars and her son is held prisoner in the basement along with his huge swollen testicles (an idea based on an illustration in an old medical book), a condition contracted whilst in search of erotica in Bernice.

For the wild and stormy night, Mrs Hammond dramatically plays host to her stranded guests (which include a circus animal keeper, a ladies underwear designer with a phobia of ladies underwear and the fundamentalist wife of a country singer), who are systematically led to her ill-fated son's sex den. A room well equipped with pornography, sex toys, KTV jelly and spy holes for Gen's eyes only. As she waddles she masturbates with a pecked cucumber (that eventually gets chewed on by the fundamentalist lady Yuk!) As time goes by, secrets are exposed, stories are told and relationships are either built or devastated.

To be more precise about the narrative structure would be impossible without having a copy of the film constantly on hand as sub-plot after sub-plot is introduced at a frantic pace, resulting not in an incoherent mess but one of cult cinema's great joys. The script is probably the most exhilarating you will ever encounter. I suggest that script-writer George Kuchar is indeed the mentally deranged bastard offspring of Tennessee Williams.

After being given a basic story by the director (friend and one time student) Carl McDowell and Mark Ellinger, Kuchar wrote this epic whilst spending time (as he does each year) studying weather conditions in Oklahoma.

Originally planned to have a running time of around 80mins, the complete uncensored version is still bulging with extravagant monologues dealing with a multitude of clashing emotions and situations. The entire cast never ceases to talk. Even when participating in strenuous sexual activities, these characters speak (not the expected porno drops like 'take that big dick') - wretched lots of outrageous dialogue.

Despite the explicit visuals, sex THUNDERCRACK! - style has nothing to do with erotica! It is basic and unexplored hard-core, due not only to the fact that Kuchar hates trying to be erotic (it embarrasses him), but he loves to dwell on showing us the essential ugliness of human behaviour. Generally he shows us down the toilet, but here he stays in the bedroom, revealing ugly people with lubricant dripping penials, gagging during fellatio and fighting a losing battle with cumbersome sex toys. The 'Lower Side' this is certainly not! The effect, as one Variety critic correctly stated, is revulsion. However, sexual gloss is not what Kuchar and McDowell have in mind, both are no strangers to the field of sexuality (especially invasions of traditional sexuality). McDowell's camera is often confrontational on the subject, but here the sex is satirical.

Camp? Well that depends on what side of Susan Sontag you fall, so that's up to you to decide. As for being a parody that's debatable. THUNDERCRACK! is one huge parody of just about every film genre imaginable, from 'old dark house' to 'hard-core porn' and it works on every level.

Carl McDowell died of AIDS related illness in 1987 at the age of 42. On Saturday 2nd May this year the Scala cinema played a fitting tribute to this great experimental film-maker, not only with a package of rare film material but also with the invitation to 'Meet Mason Eaten', who talked openly about her acting career with McDowell and the Kuchar twins. Perhaps the presentation of a floral bouquet spiked with cucumbers was a little predictable, but a discussion on the subject proved enlightening. [Eaten did not want to do that particular scene but agreed on the grounds that it would not be excessively graphic. McDowell then secretly used a telephoto lens for maximum exploitation.] Unfortunately the audience that day had been infiltrated by an angry bigot who became rude and contemptuous towards the guest of honour because THUNDERCRACK! along with all its 'unsanitary' sex, did not have a preceding AIDS warning. To question the possibility of such a pretext (patronising as it may seem) is fair enough, but to demand?

That particular guest finally gave up the ghost and made his exit shouting two times at the audience (that we all suffer a certain 'bloodlust' I ask you!)

Despite my praise of this cult classic, I recommend it only to terminal sleaze addicts like myself. To the uninitiated however all I can say is, beware, you may find yourself outraged!

David Greenall.

THE SLEAZE FILES



THUNDERCRACK!

USA 1975

A Thomas Bros. Film Studio release.
Director, photography, editor, effects - Carl McDowell.
Producers - John and Charles Thomas.
Assistant Director - Mango D'Connor.
Screenplay, lighting, effects - George Kuchar.
Music, sound effects - Mark Ellinger.
Sound recording - Roy Ransing, (music) Steve Mulcairn.
Costume, make-up - Mr. Dominic (aka George Kuchar).

Cast
Merion Eaten (Gert Hermandorf).
George Kuchar (Ring).
Melinda McDowell (Sarah).
Mookie Bladgett (Chandler).
Maia Benson (Tina).
Rick Johnson (Traydy).
Ken Scudder (Bond).
Maggie Pyle (Wilene).
Bernie Boyle (Sensu Tostado).
Mark Ellinger (Charlie Hammond).
Virginia Griffin (Sarah Lou Phillips).
Michelle Gross (Maia Hoop Girl).
Laurie Handricks (Simon Cassidy's Mother).
Billy Peradise (Mrs. Harlan).
John Thomas (Simon Cassidy).
Pamela Primate (Medusa).

16mm. 8&W
Original running time -
150mins. (Monthly Film Bulletin).
150mins. (Variety).
Cut versions - 124mins. and 90mins.

SEVERED SEGMENTS!

RANK SHOCKS

Some of the most promising upcoming projects seem to be under the Rank banner. First up is Bernard Rose's adaptation of Clive Barker's short story *The Hellbound*: the film adaptation entitled **CANDYMAN**. With a cast that includes Virginia Madsen (inexorable from *HIGHLANDER 2*) and as the screaming girl in Dennis Hopper's *HOT SPOTS* the film also stars Xenia Sotirou (TERMINATOR 2), Kate Winslet (SLANCE OF THE LAMBS) and as the film's titular mythical monster Tony Todd who as well as appearing in *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* as Kurn the Klingon brother of Lt. Worf, will soon become best known to genre fans as the new Ben in *Scream 3* to make of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD: CANDYMAN* a quote "A horror film in the real sense of the word - it dealt with the elements of divinity and death, not just a man with a big knife" - reflecting words uttered from director Rose, who helmed the minor classic *PAPERHOUSE*. **CANDYMAN** is as forward word suggests, excellent indeed and looks set to become one of the years sleeper hits - and let's face it we need one! Also ready for release from Rank though when is uncertain, is Joe De Longhi's quip *HIGHWAY TO HELL*, which I caught recently. Wonderfully witty and bizarre to a point *HIGHWAY TO HELL* stars Chad Lowe, Kristy Swanson (soon to be seen in 20th Century Fox's *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*) and Patrick Bergin who has great fun as the ultimate villain - catch the lovely shock's giggle fest when it does see the light of day. Finally from Rank, a film destined to be one of next year's most controversial outings, entitled *RESERVATION DOGS* - this non-gore outing concentrates on a failed robbery attempt carried out by underworld thugs. However what will undoubtedly bring about the film's notoriety is its brutal violence - no ordinary mainstream gasser here, this film is graphic in the extreme. Tentatively planned for a January release, we hope to have coverage of all three next issue.

GOING WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE - AT LAST!



Following the BBC's recent airing of the original previously uncut *Star Trek* pilot *The Cage* to herald its 25th anniversary re-run of the original series, the Beeb has seemingly finally thrown in the towel and has decided to screen the famous four banned episodes. The genesis of these episodes being banned came about in 1970 with the showing of the episode *Murder* for the first time, which was met by a few letters of outrage from concerned parents. With this in mind, the BBC screened all its episodes and removed a further three 'Whore Gods Destroy', 'The Empath' and 'Plate 5 Strophedion' - these never being shown - until now it would seem. None of the episodes are particularly outrageous - 'Mini' concerns virus-infected children, 'Whore Gods Destroy' is set in an insane asylum and was seen shyly banned for a scene where a woman is 'blown up'. 'The Empath' contains some incred-

bly mild torture and McCoy on his death bed and finally *Plate 5 Strophedion* centres on mind-control and depicts some awkward scenes of satire seems to have nothing in it whatsoever that could merit its censorship. As stated the BBC is confident it will screen the series in its entirety this time, though it has got the option of cutting the episode rather than banning it outright. An action taken with *THE NEXT GENERATION* as a couple of occasions, so to use what happens you'll just have to be in front of your TV on Wednesday evenings. The first of the banned episodes *Mini* is the eighth episode after the pilot and same which between. What are little girls made of! and 'Digger of the mind'.

COMING UP!

Sam Rams is eagerly awaited *ARMY OF DARKNESS: EVIL DEAD III* will premiere on these shores at the London Film Festival in November (which we will have a full report on next issue) and gets a national release early next year. Also on show will be *Sam Rams' NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*, which is still awaiting a full UK distribution (see preview on page 10). Talking of film festivals, there should be further Nothing Shocking and 'Yin-Yin' Extreme! festivals before the year's due. *Cosplay's DRACULA THE UNTOLD STORY* opens in the States on Friday 13th November after a delayed release which is reportedly completed, this really could be a make or break film for the future of the genre. Keep your fingers crossed. Talking of *FRIDAY THE 13TH* don't be fooled by New Line stating they've shelved any future projects - they deliberately bought the rights to the series to film the long delayed *JASON V FRIDAY* project. This will come about depending on Freddy's immediate agenda, it now seems certain as revealed by Peter Jackson in our interview this issue, that his treatment of the film is myth won't get the greenlight, but get this - it would seem Wes Craven has made up with the New Line suits and he may well do another *ELM STREET* encounter himself - does anybody care? *PET SEMATARY II* has failed to live up to the box office expectations of the original - does anybody care? *21 Springfield's* pet project *I* (I thought *HOCKEY* was his pet project) *JURASSIC PARK* will see use revolutionary computer generated special effects, and could well revolutionise film effects work as we know it (sounds like a Chevrolet advert!) and it certainly has to do major business at the box office. For the budget is already in excess of 100 million dollars! If nothing else it should mark the return of the rampaging dinosaur movie. Roger Vadim will make *BARBARELLA 2* with *TWIN PEAKS* Celine Dion. Media has *MARQUE COP 3* lined up for early next year - more on that soon. Anthony Perkins has died of AIDS related diseases. He will of course be eternally remembered for his timeless portrayal of Norman Bates in the original *PSYCHO* and its sequels, and although he found his way into numerous film projects, he was always typecast and invariably destined to play the psychotic. In such dire fare as *EDGE OF SANITY*. Interestingly one of his last roles was in Stuart Gordon's little seen TV movie *DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS* where Perkins played a samurai - who was a good guy! He will be greatly missed within the genre and we hope to have a fuller tribute and full filmography next issue. From the masterful to the miserable, Trama have *CLASS OF NUCLEO HIGH IN THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SUB* *HUNGARIAN* airing for release on the tail of *NUCLEO HIGH* which comes out on Scimitar about

now! Incidentally to win a *NUCLEO HIGH* III poster, keep reading! It seems they always try to prematurely bury the western, despite the fact that most reviews seem to have made big bucks at the box office (*SILVERADO*, *YOUNG GUNS 1 & 2*, *DANCES WITH WOLVES*) and the list isn't also one of the best. Clint Eastwood is always watchable, but *THE UNDISCOVERED* is a same thing else - chase your narrow minded horror affluence and check this one out. Talking of tough guys, don't miss *THE LAST BOY SCOUT* starring Bruce Willis and Damon Wayans. Great, sarcastic and ultra violent, this is undoubtedly the action film of the year, and beats *LETHAL WEAPON 3* at its own game! Written by Shake Black *LETHAL WEAPON: MONSTER SQUAD* this is full of some of the best one liners yet and has my favourite line of the year with "Sit, we are being beaten up by the inventor of scabell!" See at Bruce Willis can also be found in the amazingly off beat *DEATH BECOMES HER*, which although co-starring Meryl Streep and Goldie Hawn, is still recommended to MONSTRO!

on because of its amazing special effects. State of the art springs to mind, Robert (ROGER RABBIT) Zemeckis directs. Finally if you're intrigued by the music *OFF DUTY* (album) (album) and want to learn more about make-up and special effects, join I suggest you write off to John Woodbridge productions, for their useful newsletter for those wanting visual instruction, John is presenting a series of free foam latex demonstrations at the puppet centre Battersea Arts Centre in early November (as well as a large event in Los Angeles in December for those whose budgets stretch that far).



CLASS OF NUCLEO HIGH III

far! contact John at P O BOX 78 SOUTHALL, MIDDLESEX SY9 6ST. CORRECTION: *SURVIVAL QUEST* (page 12) Enrique Hahn Cages 5 Bloop THEY LIVED ON HUMAN FLESH was nestled THE HIGHEST HELL for UK release, and loses its lurid cover and enter photos (just thought I'd point that out to avoid confusion ok Mike?)

HAVE YOUR SAY

You'll have seen myself and the other writers giving our opinions in the latest releases on page 31 with our review and 'Well I don't see why we should have all the fun, so get writing now - give us your ratings of the films covered (rating them 0-5 as we have) and next issue we'll print as a guide of reader's opinions - that way we can not only see what sort of junk you like enjoy, but it will give us some idea as to what we should be covering in future issues. As if that's not enough to tempt you into getting up off your butt and perking your response the first five reader's ratings pulled out of Richard Griffiths V-fests will make an exclusive *THE SPECIAL TWINNING* THE SUBHUNGARIAN, *NUCLEO HIGH III* quad poster 'Courtney of Trama Inc' which are just like the ones that adorned the sea-front at Cannes earlier in the year in fact they probably are the ones that adorned the sea-front. Send your ratings to the EDITOR'S ADDRESS.

ALIEN TRIVIA ANSWERS!

1) Nostalgia as a homage to author Joseph Conrad whose book *THE DUELISTS* was the source material of Ridley Scott's first film, 2) Harry Dean Stanton, 3) Don O'Bannon director of *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD* and the notorious *THE RESURRECTION*, 4) The Black Destroyer, 5) *FORCA AND THE OUTLAW*, 6) Ellen and Maryann, as needed by *ALIENS: THE SPECIAL TWINNING*, 7) CONTAMINATION from Italian book Luigi Comi, 8) *GALAXY OF TERROR* from Roger Corman which had an early role for Robert (Freddy Krueger) England, 9) MY TWO DADS, and finally 10) Fincher was an apprentice for Industrial Light and Magic on *RETURN OF THE JEDI*. There, you know something new every day don't you!

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In the first of his regular new column, we've given **RICHARD GRIFFITHS** total freedom to express his opinions on current talking points. As Richard's ravings are entirely his own and not necessarily those shared by the editorial staff, can you please direct all hate mail and correspondence of a threatening or insulting nature to him direct and leave us alone.....**THANK YOU!!**

Once again the horror press is filled with uninformed irrational hysteria declaring the United Kingdom a police state and slamming the BBFC for castrating the very essence of films. Letters from outraged fans include such choice phrases as "Nazi tactics", "A pointless, distasteful, scandalous activity", and "Communism by default" What on earth can these people be talking about?

The reason for this latest onslaught is, of course, the arrest in May of a group of people from the north of England - including some in their early teens - who were copying and selling videos of films that had no certificates. Newspaper and television reports at the time hyped the story up, as they are prone to do simply to outrage the general public, by saying the films showed cannibalism, torture and - quite untruthfully because there's no proof snuff movies exist - real-life murder.

Fan reaction has been swift and cohesive. The police action is declared totally unacceptable for the democratic society we live in and easy well-worn targets like Mary Whitehouse and the BBFC are dragged into the argument even though they had nothing at all to do with the woooo! But, what is most disturbing is that the fan reaction completely misses the real issue. Not once does anyone condemn those who have been arrested for dragging horror into disrepute. And certainly nobody mentions the bare fact that these people were knowingly breaking the law of the country they live in.

We have come a long way since the bad old days of the early 1980's. A **FRIDAY THE 13TH** film has been shown on television, horror film magazines are thriving and **ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS** has had a very successful video re-release. The last thing we want to see is another public backlash against horror films. Yet, here was a group of people who thought they were above the law simply because it did not suit them. Well, contrary to popular opinion, laws are not made to be broken and even if we do not like them we have to live with them. Complaining about these arrests is tantamount to condoning lawlessness. The only outcome of the publicity created by the police action is that the selfish activities of the accused could trigger another round of horror-film bashing which will adversely affect us all. And please don't think that all horror fans are angels. There are some very - very nasty rumours going

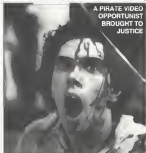
around concerning rival horror film festival organisers and the identity of the rat who supplied the police with a sheet of names and addresses that sparked off the raids just to save his own skin. Who can this be? Libel laws do not permit.

We do not live in a Nazi, Communist or a police state. Using exaggerated, sensationalised phrases like these drops the horror fan-writer to the level of the gutter journalist who claims the films contain real deaths.

We have rules, sure, covering film distribution and saying what is and isn't acceptable on the screen. Everything cannot be allowed. Lines have to be drawn. Child pornography, animal buggery and real deaths are clearly way over the line if such things exist. It then begins to get very subjective as to what is and isn't acceptable. This is why people are appointed and given the responsibility by the elected government to screen films that want a release in the UK. The BBFC is clearly not to blame this time and it is pathetic to see the organisation continually singled out for attack when it does a far, far better job than many of its equivalents abroad. Sure, you can point to, say, the Netherlands and see that the Dutch anything-goes attitude to film releases has no ill effects on the public and is clearly much more liberal than ours. But there are a lot, not more countries where films are treated much, much worse than in the UK. Look at what's happening in Finland, or even Germany now, where films such as **HALLOWEEN** and **WAXWORK** are unavailable because the powers that be do not consider them suitable for public consumption. Even the US, which is so seductively held up as a paragon of virtue by the misinformed, has more problems with certification than we have. The only difference is that films do not legally require a certificate in the US. If they did, Americans would look longingly over to the liberal UK.

James Ferman, director of the BBFC, is reported to have said "the less censorship the better" and indeed cuts are not always made at the insistence of the BBFC. We all recognise the need for accurate certification and often it is the distributors who tone down a film to get a lower certificate, particularly with theatrical releases so more people can pay to see the movie. Sometimes these scissors are reinstated for the video release which receives a higher certificate. Compare and contrast the theatrical and video releases and certificates of **BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA**. So the only connection the BBFC has with the issue, is the question should it introduce a 21 certificate. I do not believe such a move would make much difference. **THE NEW YORK RIPPER** will never, ever get a legal release of any description in this country no matter what certificates are available. Also, it would simply be uneconomic for many small minority films to be released due to the high cost of certification, duplication, cover printing and distribution. And even if a 21 certificate was created, the high level of tolerance in the existing 18 certificate means any 21 films would certainly contravene the Obscene Publications Act and we all know what that leads to.

So next time you see such sensationalised reports on the television, understand the guilty are fanning the good name of horror films. Don't look for scapegoats. Recognise these people for the selfish criminals they are.



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The background of the cover is a photograph of a man with a wide-eyed, screaming expression. His face is covered in blood, particularly around the eyes and mouth. He is holding a large, rectangular knife that is also covered in blood. The overall color palette is dark and moody, with a strong emphasis on red from the blood and the title.

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